A Community Voice

An explorative study of Maya community radio practice in Guatemala.

Kristin Marie Skaar

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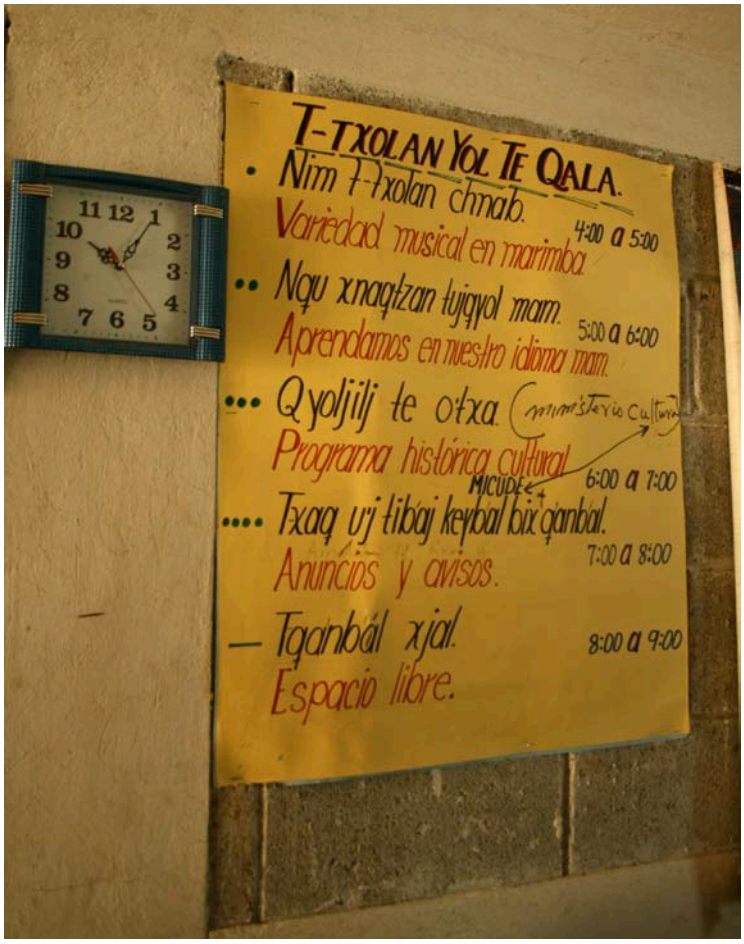

Afternoon program schedule for *Radio Xob'il yol* in Todos Santos. Photo: Kristin Marie Skaar, 2010.

Abstract

This study explores the use of community radio among the indigenous population in Guatemala. With a qualitative approach I examine the nature of Guatemalan community radio and its potentials and challenges, mainly from the practitioners' point of view. Situated within a fragmented society with deeply ingrained social, political and cultural barriers, an expanding network of community radio stations is fighting its way through a corporative, commercial media landscape. By drawing on theories on *community media* and the role civic media sectors can play for deliberative public spheres, I argue that the radio stations are filling essential gaps of both the media landscape and the society in which they exist. However, the community radio format is still new and a number of challenges are preventing the radio practitioners to develop further and to operate more independently. Still, I also argue that the purpose of community radio in the Guatemalan indigenous context should be understood differently than from what a Western perspective immediately would conclude. Their focus on *community* instead of the individual, as well as the long tradition of deliberation within Maya community life, is challenging Western 'normative' views on journalism and the ideal type of a democratic media channel. This further demonstrates how the ideal of objectivity and critical journalism sometimes must be left for the sake of community identification and the protection of cultures and peoples.

Sammendrag

Denne studien utforsker bruk av lokalradio blant urbefolkningen i Guatemala. Gjennom en kvalitativ tilnærming undersøker jeg kjennetegnene ved lokalradio i Guatemala, hovedsakelig fra utøvernes ståsted. Et voksende nettverk av lokalradiostasjoner forsøker å kjempe seg gjennom et korporativt, kommersielt medielandskap, og befinner seg innenfor et fragmentert samfunn med dypt inngrodde sosiale, politiske og kulturelle barrierer. Med utgangspunkt i teorier om *community media* og hvilken rolle sivile mediesektorer kan ha for et mer deliberativt offentlig rom, hevder jeg at radiostasjonene fyller viktige hull i medielandskapet og samfunnet de tilhører. Konseptet er imidlertid fortsatt nytt, og utøverne møter flere utfordringer som hindrer dem fra å videreutvikle radiostasjonene og å operere mer uavhengig. Jeg hevder likevel også at formålet med urfolks bruk av lokalradio i Guatemala bør forstås annerledes enn hva et vestlig perspektiv umiddelbart vil konkludere. Fokuset på *fellesskap* i stedet for individet, samt mayabefolkningens lange tradisjon med deliberasjon i det lokale samfunnslivet, utfordrer vestlige 'normative' syn på journalistikk og idealet om en demokratisk mediekanal. Dette viser videre hvordan idealet om objektivitet og kritisk journalistikk noen ganger må forlates til fordel for fellesskapet, tilhørighet og beskyttelsen av kultur og folkegrupper.

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Kristin Marie Skaar

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Guatemala: Maps and Basic Statistics

Size:	108,889 sq km
Population:	13,550,440 (July 2010 est.)
Urban population:	49% of total population (2008)
Life expectancy:	70.29 years
Government type:	Constitutional democratic republic
Languages:	Spanish 60%, Amerindian languages 40% (22 officially recognized Amerindian languages, including Quiche, Cakchiquel, Kekchi, Mam, Garifuna, and Xinca)
Religions:	Roman Catholic, Protestant, indigenous Mayan beliefs
GDP per capita:	4,562 $
Human Development Index Ranking:	122 (of 182)
Population income below poverty line:	19.7 per cent below $2 a day 56.2 per cent below poverty line
Adult illiteracy:	26.8 per cent
Major source of revenue:	Agriculture (Coffee, Bananas, Sugar, etc.)

Source: UN Human Development Index 2009; CIA World Fact Book 2010.

1. Introduction

What happens when rural indigenous villages get to control and manage their own local media channel?

When I first read about a growing Guatemalan movement, fighting for the right to have their own local community radio stations, this question immediately came to mind. What are the characteristics of this kind of media channel? Despite minor academic attention until recent years, studies demonstrate how community media can be important social services for minority groups, indigenous populations and rural communities – especially in a world with increasing globalization and media homogenization or where cultures and languages may disappear (Browne 1996, Pavarala & Malik 2007, Howley 2010). By carrying a strong developmental perspective, as these kinds of alternative media channels often do, they encourage citizen participation in new ways that break with dominating media structures and focus on issues that would normally be left out by mainstream media. At its best, community media can work as effective tools for a stronger, participatory democracy and strengthen the local public spheres (Navarro 2009, Howley 2010).

According to the growing indigenous community radio movement in Guatemala – with support from international actors – one essential challenge remains for community radio to fully flourish: to implement their proposal for a community media law. The current Telecommunications Law of Guatemala does not recognize non-profit community radio stations, and with the existing auction-based system, large commercial radio stations are buying up frequencies that non-profit initiatives cannot afford. With the Peace Accords of 1996, after more than 30 years of civil war, the state guaranteed the right for the Maya population to utilize and control their own communications media. However, as has been the case with several other promises, this has yet to be implemented.

In the context of resistance and lack of political attention, an expanding network of community radio practitioners have joined together to improve the situation for the many indigenous community radio stations and to carry through the law proposal. With sparse resources they arrange workshops and training sessions, and are bringing the Maya culture and the many Maya languages to the airwaves.

1.1 Approach

In the following study I explore the nature of Guatemalan community radio and its potentials and challenges. Apart from fighting its way through a corporate, commercial media system, the community radio movement is situated within a fragmented society with deeply ingrained social, political and cultural barriers. Indigenous peoples' access to information and participation in society is especially of interest. To prevent my perspective from becoming too wide, I have chosen to focus on the radio practitioners' point of view. Literature often highlights the empowering and political value of alternative media outlets, while fewer studies have looked at the processes of production (Fairchild 2010, Atton 2009). By bearing in mind the historical context of Guatemala and the Maya population's experiences, I will look at what challenges the staff are faced with in their work, what type of programming they focus on, and how they interact with their communities.

The context and cultural landscape I am approaching is therefore very different from my own, where my presuppositions and theoretical assumptions are likely to be challenged throughout the process. Also, as my point of focus has been on the radio staff and their experiences, I have not been able to examine media reception and media usage within the communities, which would require a separate project in and of itself. However, getting in touch with the local community, staying in the villages and listening to the experiences of the radio staff has at the very least given me a useful impression of this side as well.

Research questions

Bearing in mind the social, political and cultural conditions for indigenous people and the community radio movement in Guatemala, I would like to explore the following:

- *What is the role of community radio in Guatemalan indigenous communities?*
- *How are the Guatemalan community radio practitioners experiencing and perceiving their work?*

These questions will be answered by looking at specific factors that I believe characterize the situation. Through this, my intention is to find indicators that can contribute to this one final question, which is based on what community media theory has previously highlighted:

- *In what way can community radio in Guatemala work as a tool for deliberative public spheres in indigenous communities?*

Motivation

After personally having seen and experienced the different lifestyles and cultures of various

parts of Latin America, I was deeply touched by the prominent social injustice. In addition, it makes you wonder how those small villages, miles away from urban areas, manages to engage in what happens in their own country. Many indigenous people are illiterate. Some do not even speak Spanish. How do they negotiate for their rights, which on many areas are still ignored? How can they be part of the public debate? Or do they even care?

Globally, indigenous people are still among the world's poorest, and continue to suffer discrimination and marginalization. Their fight for land rights, culture, identity, recognition and self-determination continues and illustrates the clash that occurs when traditional societies meet the larger modern ones. As for Guatemala, the fight for a community-friendly and more democratic media system clearly demonstrates what challenges a fragmented society faces today. The tensed relationship between the indigenous population and the wealthier Spanish-speaking population has characterized the Guatemalan history – a long-lasting fight for recognition, access to political participation, equal rights and protection of indigenous language and culture (Ekern & Bendiksby 2001).

Also, despite being a small country geographically, Guatemala has 22 officially recognized languages, and various indigenous groups make up the majority of the population. This reality must undoubtedly lead to several challenges for Guatemala as nation – which history shows. An ethnically fragmented society like Guatemala also creates challenges for deliberative media channels and the principle of an open public debate where every citizen shall have access to information and the right to express themselves (as stated in the Guatemalan Constitution, Article 35).

Supporting indigenous people is the main focus of the Norwegian government's foreign political engagement in Guatemala today. Starting from January 2009, Norwegian aid to Guatemala is mainly concentrated to the so-called *Maya Program,* a collaboration between the Norwegian Embassy and three UN agencies in Guatemala. This program focuses mainly on promoting the Maya population's rights, improving conditions for a pluralistic state, as well as contributing to the fight against poverty (Regjeringen.no 2009). Therefore, as a Norwegian I found it interesting to look at the strength and potential for community radio stations within this context, which so far is not part of the Maya Program.

On top of this, indigenous people live under different conditions and have a different worldview than myself. Maybe they will have a different understanding of the purpose of a local media channel?

1.2 Structure

Chapter 2 outlines the theoretical perspective of this study, which is based on participatory democracy and alternative media theory. In chapter 3, I present and explain the qualitative methodology I have used, based on my ten weeks of fieldwork in Guatemala. In order to provide a contextual basis for further analysis, chapter 4 provides an introduction to the Guatemalan context, with a short history, a description of central issues concerning the situation for the Maya population and an overview of the current media landscape. In the following five chapters I present and discuss my findings, which is divided into five themes that jointly address my research questions: *the legal problem, cultural preservation, communication and information, lack of resources, participation* and *role understanding.* As a central issue for Guatemalan community radio concerns the legal problem, I start by explaining more about this, the community radio movement and how the radio practitioners deal with working 'illegally'. Chapter 6 looks at the cultural value of Guatemalan community radio, which demonstrates an essential part of the Maya population's call for more recognition. Chapter 7 continues with how community radio responds to the need for better access to information and communication in indigenous communities, while chapter 8 addresses central limitations community radio stations are faced with. Chapter 9 compiles the largest section of my analysis by looking at the participation aspect, which is an important component of community media. Chapter 10 explores how the radio practitioners perceive their role at the radio stations. Finally, chapter 11 sums up the central points from my analysis and discussion, bringing to the thesis a final conclusion.

1.3 A note on terminology

Despite a long debate concerning the definition of *indigenous people*, not even the UN has managed to adopt one universal definition. It is also believed that indigenous people themselves should have the right to define what and who they are. As a clarification, I will point out the definition by José R. Martínez Cobo, which according to the UN report *State of the World's Indigenous Peoples* (UN 2009), the first worldwide report of its kind, is one of the most used concepts of *indigenous*:

> "Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider them selves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing on those territories, or parts of them" (Martinez Cobo in UN 2009:4).

The Maya is a broad definition for the indigenous population in Guatemala. The term *Indians* has historically been used about the Mayas. However, it is estimated that the 22 linguistic communities either belong to the Maya family, the *Xinkas* or the *Garífunas* (IWGIA 2010). In this paper, I will use the broader term, referring to them either as Maya or indigenous, which is also what my informants frequently applied.

Ladinos originally referred to those who speak Spanish in Guatemala. The term emerged after the Spanish settlements began in 1524, where the newcomers shared clearly different distinctiveness and 'European' values. However, as the Ladino identity also became a way to achieve political power and improve businesses, many wealthy Mayas adopted the Ladino lifestyle and values (Grandin 2000). Today, *Ladinos* identify themselves as modern and superior to the Mayas. They are, in contrast to indigenous people, in progress, or as Hale puts it, 'mas que un indio' – more than an 'Indian', which historically has been a common and more discriminating term for indigenous populations in Latin America (Hale 2006). Although the difference between Mayas and Ladinos varies, I use this term when demonstrating the distinct difference between the two groupings.

Locutores is a Spanish term for *announcer, host, reporter* or *broadcaster.* It the general term I use when referring to the radio practitioners at the radio stations. This is also the term most frequently used by my informants, although they further apply other terms when more fully describing themselves. I find it hard to land on any of the English terms, as their role is somehow different and must be described more fully, which I will demonstrate in chapter 10 when looking at how the radio practitioners define themselves.

2. Theory

The development of Guatemalan community radio stations provides an interesting basis for examining how an indigenous population copes with being marginalized in society and within the dominant media discourse. Community media researcher Kevin Howley (2010) highlights that by having participatory structures, abilities for creating a sense of belonging, as well as serving local needs and interests, community media can cultivate "a more deliberative approach to participation in public life" (Howley 2010: 73).

In search for more participative media channels, community media arise outside the dominating media institutions, and its practitioners often lack professional qualifications as journalists. For the purpose of this study, I will now outline my theoretical framework by drawing attention to these alternative public spheres. Alternative media and alternative journalism – where I have chosen to focus on the community-oriented initiatives – arise out of these spheres. As my overall research question points out, *deliberation* is a key word: In what way can Guatemalan community radio work as tools for deliberative local public spheres in the indigenous communities? And on a broader level, how can community media interact and play a deliberative role in a democratic process where there has been, and still is, a deep-rooted gap between a dominant, limited public sphere and the smaller 'indigenous' sphere?

In order to discuss this further, I will start by defining the most central concepts. The following theoretical introduction is meant to lay the grounds for a more in-depth discussion, at which time I present and analyze my findings from the Guatemalan context.

2.1 In search of a participatory democracy

Community media is dedicated to the principles of free expression and a *participatory democracy* (Howley 2005:2). Broadly speaking[1], a participatory democracy requires extensive and active engagement of citizens in the self-governing process; "it means government not just for but also by and of the people" (Barber in Zittel & Fuchs 2007:39). A participatory democracy further requires an active *civil society,* which can be defined as "the

[1] *Participatory democracy* is a normative model, and offers several approaches (Zittel & Fuchs 2007:39). I will not go into further discussions about approaches and political theories on democracy. My purpose is primarily to put the concept and idea of community media into a broader theoretical framework.

social space in which individuals are able to engage in a range of activities through informal association" (Lovan et al. 2004:8). Civil society operates independent from the state, existing among all kinds of voluntary associations that in one way or another are promoting and encouraging "widespread participation in public life" (Howley 2010:72). Consequently, it is also within civil society that community media initiatives develop.

For the democratization processes in Latin America, a big challenge has been to overcome deep-rooted cultural barriers between a mainly prosperous, Spanish-speaking elite and the widespread indigenous populations after a long tradition of authoritarian rule and colonial power. Such tendencies are believed to be common for societies in transition from authoritarian rule to democratization, with continuing violence and social and economic instability (Vilas 2003:3), and where power remains in the hands of military forces and small elites (Yashar 2003:260). Despite proclaiming 'a democratic state', poorer minority groups exist alongside formal democratic institutions, hindered from participation in public life. According to Vilas, they might *resemble* democracies, but are, in reality, strongly adjusted in order to become compatible with the persistent elite control (Vilas 2003:9). As I will show in chapter 4 about Guatemala's historical background, this social polarization – the gap between rich and poor – is further visible in the highly privatized and commercial Latin American media landscape, where large media conglomerates have gained significant political power (La Rue 2010b). In such contexts, civil society has the potential for serving as "a wellspring for popular movements" (Howley 2010:72) and encouraging "resistance to repressive regimes of state and corporate power" (ibid).

From an institutional point of view, a participatory democracy presupposes that citizens are active in political processes and strongly criticizes the more liberal, elite-centered conception of democracy where elected representatives receive significant power (Zittel & Fuchs 2007:9, 50). This can be particularly challenging for states with significant cultural and ethnical heterogeneity. In order to develop a more participative democracy in a Latin American context, the question is how to change these anti-democratic political traditions and reconstruct old state-society relations, and, at the same time, to facilitate the conditions for the special rights of indigenous populations. The homogeneous nature of today's political society is still somehow dividing the groups into different social classes, which I, by focusing on Guatemala, will explain more thoroughly in chapter 4. As Vilas puts it, "what kind of citizenship, what sense of participatory efficacy, can develop in such a setting?" (Vilas 2003:7). With limited conditions for freedom of expression, the ability for civil society to

encourage participation and serve as "a vehicle for defending human, civil and political rights against institutional or systematic abuse" (ibid) remains restricted.

Deliberatition and alternative public spheres

With participatory democracy as framework for democratic media, community media studies often draw on the concept of the *public sphere,* which in this paper will be applied by its broad definition[2]. In Habermas' words, the public sphere is "a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed" (Habermas in Saeed 2009:467). It is the ideal discursive realm open for all citizens, mediating between society and state. However, Habermas' definition received critique for not revealing the "power differentials between various members of society" (Howley 2010:74), like, for instance, the gap between the indigenous population and the dominating, more prosperous population in a society. Later theorists have called for more focus on *alternative* public spheres – the spheres that develop as a result of reactions or mechanisms by subordinate social groups that are excluded from the dominating sphere (Howley 2010:74, Vatikiotis 2010:33).

For alternative media channels such as community radio to foster these alternative spheres in line with ideals of a participatory democracy, a closer look at the *deliberative* dynamics can be fruitful. The term *deliberation* has often been used in relation to modern theories on democracy, drawing on similar principles as the theory of participatory democracy[3]. It can be defined as "the discussion and consideration that is undertaken before a decision or action is made" (Romano 2010:3). Deliberation is not equivalent to mobilization and further presupposes that all kinds of community stakeholders – minority voices, the disadvantaged, women, teenagers and more deviant voices – can participate in a diverse debate where unpopular views can flourish. Both on the national and community level, political decisions should develop through deliberative talks, seeking a common good (ibid:4).

Navarro (2009) applied the term *deliberative public sphere* when studying a community radio station outside of Lima, Peru. Based on her interpretation of Avritzer (2002), a deliberative public sphere is "a space where collective and individual, popular and non-

[2] Habermas' analysis in *The Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1989) has later been developed, discussed criticized and linked to other theories. I will limit myself to the most general aspects and its connection with community media.

[3] See for example Zittel & Fuchs 2007.

popular actors within a community have access to participate and have the possibility to add new issues to the discussion agenda" (Navarro 2009:623). An examination of these processes is necessary in order to analyze the actual possibility for an alternative media channel to transform the public sphere. Community participation is not necessarily enough; one must look at the ways in which people are participating. Therefore, without attempting to analyze all the variables, I find it at least fruitful to follow similar footsteps and reflect upon deliberation when looking at the role Guatemalan community radio stations play in their local communities.

2.2 Alternative Media

Criticism and resistance to the dominating media systems today have partly grown out of dissatisfaction with the mainstream media form and content (Howley 2005:2) and from the concern that technology developments "would ultimately cater only to state and transnational commercial and political interests" (Pavarala & Malik 2007:15). This has also "eroded the diversity and quality of information in the public sphere, rendering civil society increasingly ineffective" (ibid). If a more participatory democracy is needed, this surely sets premises for the media landscape.

In order to make the media discourse open to different social groups, Curran (2005) emphasizes the need for what he defines as *specialist sectors* – sectors "enabling different social groups to debate within their terms of reference issues of social identity, group interest, political strategy and social-moral values" (Curran 2005:137). For a strong democratic media system and, consequently, a strong public sphere, there should be, in addition to public service broadcasting at the core, private market and civic media sectors. According to Curran, this system is crucial for civil society, as it will prevent elite dominance and instead ensure an open, pluralistic system and stimulate to self-organized initiatives (ibid:144-45). A civic media sector not only offers an alternative to the mainstream media but also challenges hegemonic structures and market-run or state-centered media (Pavarala & Malik 2007:15).

Alternative media channels take place in settings *outside* the media institutions, offering "possibilities for individuals and groups to create their own media from the social margins" (Atton 2009:272). They provide resources for minority voices to participate in the public sphere and can work as a tool in the actual "construction and maintenance of public sphere(s)" (Howley 2010:75).

Community media

The ambiguous character of alternative media makes it difficult to come up with a specific definition. Researchers have named them 'citizens' media', 'popular media', 'independent media' or 'radical media' – all depending on the context and practices. Media and communications scholar Clemencia Rodriguez is widely recognized for theorizing the concept of *citizen's media* in her effort to find a more appropriate way of describing alternative media where participants are active citizens: "as they disrupt established power relationships and cultural codes, citizens' media participants exercise their own agency in reshaping their own lives, futures, and cultures" (Rodriguez 2003:191).

However, I will continue with the definition *community media,* which I believe better focuses on my theoretical approach and the Guatemalan example. Community life and rural settlements characterize many parts of the Guatemalan geographical and cultural landscape, and, the fact that Guatemalan community radio movement deliberately focuses on the term *community* gives a good reason to apply this term myself: Community radio should be *for* the community – made *by* the community. *Community* is a wide and much discussed concept but can broadly be defined as any social group where its members share common goals, ethnicity, culture, history, geographic location or other shared interests (Christensen & Levinson 2003). In Maya culture and traditions, the notion of *community*[4] has a broader meaning. Traditionally, Maya communities share beliefs, knowledge, history, culture and language, and they work together – often more for the community than for their own individual interests. Would it therefore be natural to suggest that Maya communities have always based their local politics on deliberation? I will touch upon this aspect later in my analysis.

Nevertheless, a community group is not homogenous. Different values, interests and conflicts characterize its complex character (Sparks 2007:65). The participatory character of community media and its various communication forms and practices can further shed light on social relations that tend to be concealed by dominant media, focusing on a wide range of issues that are usually ignored by mainstream media or, rather, looked upon as a 'social problem' (Riggins 1992:14-15).

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[4] The various municipalities of rural Guatemala are called 'canton' or 'komon', which is translated as community. Komon also implies treating each other as sisters and brothers, and working for the komon means "working dedicatedly for a common good together" (Ekern 2005:79). Ekern defines this as "a collective self under construction" (ibid:83). Covic found clear examples on this when studying the indigenous Maya Catholic community of Guadalupe in Mexico: "Each person belongs to and gives to the community while the

The purpose of community media also carries a strong developmental perspective by being a non-profit service and engaging the community both as participants and users. This non-commercial nature clearly contrasts with marked-based values, as well as the larger political and economic contexts in which community media networks belong. Fairchild (2010:26-27) describes this contrast by stating that community media looks at citizens with rights – not consumers with choices. Society is a civil society – not a consumer society. In a public sphere, where the dominant media discourse limits subordinate voices to participate, community media gives them a chance. This is what should make community media tools for alternative public spheres, "where agendas are set and discussion is developed through the journalism of social movement and communities" (Atton 2009:269).

Community radio

As my study concerns *community radio,* I will briefly note central ideas concerning this kind of alternative radio, although defining community radio is as difficult as defining the multifarious nature of community media. Fairchild, after having examined several community radio stations in Australia and the United States (US), believes such normative claims are impossible, as all community radio stations differ from each other depending on how you look at them (Fairchild 2010:26). The only thing uniting them is their non-commercial nature, as described above. On this basis, Fairchild also warns about distinguishing between 'alternative', 'radical' or 'citizen's'. Such 'ideal' definitions are too limited and not even necessary. Instead, he suggests to focus on the specific context – *the processes of production* – by trying to understand the practices and experiences of these radio stations and why they do it. By looking at the processes of production, we can eventually understand the surrounding contexts in which the community radio stations exist and finally fully answer the questions: "Why do we need community radio? Is it merely a safety valve for dissent or a form of general public expression? Does it mimic the function of a public sphere but without the binding influence of publicly formed opinion on power?" (ibid:24).

When discussing the purpose of community radio, I still find it reasonable to mention the general 'universal' criteria for community radio broadcasting that AMARC[5] and

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community, in turn, gives something to each of its members" (Covic 2005:180).

[5] AMARC (*The World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters*) compiles a network of more than 4,000 community radios, federations and community media stakeholders in more than 115 countries (AMARC 2010).

UNESCO[6] points out. Although these organizations have not recently been directly involved with the Guatemalan community radio movement, their criteria and recommendations for community radio initiatives collide in many ways. Regardless, Pavarala & Malik (2007:18-19) have summarized some of AMARC and UNESCOs recommendations for community radio stations. By focusing on non-profit making, community ownership as well as control and community participation, these media channels should

- serve a recognizable community;
- promote access to media facilities and to training, production and distribution facilities as primary step towards full democratization of the communication system;
- offer the opportunity to any member of the community to initiate communication and participate in program making and evaluation;
- facilitate full interaction between the producers and receivers of messages;
- provide a right of access to minority and marginalized groups and promote and protect cultural and linguistic diversity.

Indigenous people and community media

The last point above touches upon a special issue involving alternative media and indigenous populations. Feature films, documentaries, animation, video art, internet, digital archiving, radio – in various ways indigenous people all around the world have used media formats as a means of expression, the promotion or rights and culture or the fight against discrimination (Wilson & Stewart 2008). In Guatemala, one of the most important arguments for legalizing community radio is that the radio service helps keep language and culture alive, and that in the myriad of commercial and homogenous Spanish-broadcasted media, radio is considered "the best tool to provide indigenous people with the news and information that they need" (Cultural Survival 2010a). It is a common argument and touches upon a difficult issue concerning indigenous media (Browne 1996:6). Should indigenous people have a special right to media access and to radio frequencies on the same level as they should have special land rights, ownership rights or water usage rights? The International Labour Organization

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AMARC has made the radio movement become widely recognized within the global sector of communication, advocating for the right to communicate and for a more "pluralistic and democratized media sector (Diasio 2010:193).

[6] UNESCO (*United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization)* runs the International Programme for Development of Communication (IPDC), which supports community media projects worldwide. They have recently started a new project in Guatemala, "Training of Autochtonous Community Journalists to Broaden Media Participation", which is especially aimed towards radio workers (UNESCO 2010a).

(ILO) Convention 169[7], an international convention specifically aimed at the protection of human rights for indigenous and tribal peoples, clearly emphasizes indigenous peoples' special right to land ownership and special cultural protection (ILO 1989). Apart from protection of natural resources and territory, these groups should also have the right "to use lands not exclusively occupied by them, but to which they have traditionally had access for their subsistence and traditional activities" (ibid: Art. 14). Adapted to a modern context, could this be applicable for access to media outlets and radio spectrum ownership? For instance, the Maoris in Australia proved this when using arguments from earlier land rights cases to get their right to have parts of the frequency spectrum and governmental assistance for Maori radio stations (Browne 1996:6).

Indigenous people have often experienced neglect, ignorance or negative stereotypical perpetuation in the majority media (ibid:5). From an indigenous perspective, community media can thus represent "a cultural bridge between the parallel universes of the indigenous and non-indigenous society" (Meadows 2009:523). Also AMARC highlights the importance of rights of indigenous people to have access and to participate in communications media. By focusing on common experiences and issues, indigenous cultures and languages, community media can contribute to the development of their own public sphere as well as the strengthening of their cultural rights (Malik & Pavarala 2007:43). For many, this medium *represents* the entrance to the public sphere (Browne 1996:7). By re-engaging communities and offering them a voice, community media further offers possibilities for the indigenous population "to engage in collective efforts to bring their issues to the dominant public sphere" (Meadows 2009:523). Finally, and perhaps in some cases most importantly, ethnic minority media has been shown to be an important contribution for minority languages (Riggins 1992:283).

In short, indigenous media can shed light on several central challenges for indigenous people today. Issues concerning access to information, participation and the revival of indigenous language, culture and history through community media will be further highlighted when analyzing my own findings from Guatemala.

2.3 Journalism and community media

A natural question arising when exploring community media is what kind of format and

[7] Guatemala's ratifcation of the ILO Convention 169 will be further mentioned in chapter 4.

content characterizes these practices. The characteristics of community media indicate that community media workers generally differ from media workers in mainstream media workers in skills, motivation and methods. The purpose of community media also signals that participation in content production might prove to be more important than the content itself, an idea that clashes with institutionalized and professional journalism. In short, as Howley puts it, "community media provide opportunities and resources for local publics to reassert journalism's place in the conversation of democracy" (Howley 2010:5).

Journalism is particularly linked to democratic ideals by influencing citizens' identity and facilitating for "conversations and deliberations between and among citizens and their representatives so essential to successful self-governance" (Wahl-Jorgensen & Hanitzsch 2009:3). Although the concept of journalism is rather ambiguous, there seems to be "a dominant occupational ideology" (Deuze 2005:445) concerning the characteristics, strategies, values and codes of journalism. Scholars generally agree on the ideal-typical values of journalism. Journalism provides a *public-service* – by 'doing it for the people' and seeking to be 'gatekeepers'; it focuses on *objectivity* – impartial and fair representations; *autonomy* – free and independent work; the importance *immediacy;* and *ethics* – a commitment to truth and objectivity (ibid:446-449). However, scholars are also increasingly starting to question the dominant Western view of journalism, where studies show significant gaps between theory and practice (Wasserman & de Beer 2009, Curran & Park 2000). Alternative media channels and the convergence of new media technologies challenges the notion of 'the professional journalist' as "the one who determines what publics see, hear and read about the world" (Deuze 2005:451), with the audience playing the subordinate role (Atton & Hamilton 2008:1). Instead of the more top-dow' hierarchical relationship, there is a shift towards more interactive formats.

What happens to journalism in this context? For community media to work as a tool for creating local deliberative public spheres, shouldn't this also presuppose deliberative journalism, journalism that consciously aims to promote participation and community development?

Alternative journalism

Atton (2005, 2008, 2009) uses the term *alternative journalism* for the various kinds of journalism that arise outside mainstream media organizations and is made by amateur media producers. The practitioners often lack professional training as journalist: "They write and

report from their position as citizens, as members of communities, as activists, as fans" (Atton 2009:265). Atton places these activities into the three categories of social movement media and citizens' media, local alternative journalism and fanzines and blogs (ibid). As my study favors community media, the first category is most relevant here. Still, what the newest developments and other, less high-tech alternative forms of journalism share is the call for more civic engagement: reclaiming democratic media's connection with the regular public, and criticizing the existing, dominating practices of journalism (Atton & Hamilton 2008:1). By encouraging a more radical style of reporting, alternative journalism is shaped outside corporate businesses and institutionalized formats, with "a close and non-hierarchical relationship between reader and content" (Deuze & Platon in Atton 2005:269). That is also why alternative journalistic forms frequently are concerned with the representation of underrepresented groups and the importance of working collectively (ibid). By calling for more focus on the voice of ordinary people in smaller communities and flourishing among small, peripheral marginalized groups, alternative journalism can also work as a creator and maintainer of smaller, alternative public spheres, where silenced voices are empowered to speak out (Atton 2005:270).

Alternative journalism demands a reconsideration of the ideal of journalism as public service and the established journalistic formats and offers new interpretations of the idea of objectivity and autonomy. It further challenges the concept of 'professional', ideal-typical journalism not only by turning to the people on the ground instead of relying on official sources but also in the making of their product. Its oppositional form compared to the ideal-typical values has also led journalist educators to generally ignore its practices and ethics (Atton 2005:271). What does it mean to be a journalist when basically 'everyone' can do it?

Generally, academic studies of alternative media tend to focus on the empowering and political value more than focusing on "what they do or why they do it in particular ways" (Atton 2009:274). Atton calls for more focus on the work itself: "How do they learn to become journalists or editors? How do they identify and choose their stories? How do they select and represent their sources? Are alternative journalists truly independent, or are their working methods influenced by the practices of mainstream journalism?" (ibid).

Another question when looking at community media concerns the actual participation of the locals and how the locals are encouraged to articulate their own demands on their own conditions (Sparks 2007:199). Who is participating? Are there any hidden power relations revealed in their practice? Forde et al. (2003) notes that the form and content of community

radio programming might not be able to reveal the nature of how community radio workers make sense of the world. To reveal the processes of production, "it may be more relevant to look at the ways in which personnel – volunteers and paid-workers – interact with each other and with their local community" (Forde et al. 2003:332).

Although my intention is not answer all these questions, my interviews with the volunteers might at least contribute to more knowledge of alternative media practice and how deliberative or independent Guatemalan radio practitioners are able to operate.

2.4 Challenges for community media

The questions above illustrate a few of the challenges characterizing community media in the world today, which we shall see is also the case for the Guatemalan indigenous population and the radio movement. Despite the success stories, and the well-established models for communication infrastructure and community involvement provided by some countries, a continuing problem seems to be "the lack of a coherent appropriate public policy framework to support non-profit access to broadcasting and public communications" (Pavarala & Malik 2007:44). Examples can be seen either through strict state control, or, as generally is the case in Latin America, highly privatized media ownership. A number of barriers such as costs, technology, market failure, hostile public policy frameworks and socio-cultural barriers can limit access to media communication for minority communities.

Another problem is the difficulty of sustainability. Community radio is usually a non-profit, low-budget project, where volunteers are often either young – unemployed, students or in part-time job – or elderly. This makes it difficult for long-term projects and strategies to develop (Atton & Hamilton 2008:52). In Guatemala, the community radio movement has also received help and assistance from foreign actors, which makes it useful to reflect upon their influence. In what way is guidance from the outside influencing the processes of production?

The question of how community media outlets can strengthen the local public sphere, without separating it from the larger, national sphere has also been discussed. Riggins speaks about the 'dual role' of ethnic minority media. On the one hand, he asks "what better strategy could there be for ensuring minority survival than the development by minorities of their own media conveying their own point of view in their own language?" (Riggins 1992:3). On the other hand, however, encouraging this distinctiveness might "unintentionally encourage

the assimilation of their audiences to mainstream values" (ibid). According to Riggins, the strengths of minority journalism also threaten to promote "national disintegration" (ibid:8). Castells-Talens et al. (2009) found a similar tendency when examining state intervention towards indigenous community radio stations in Mexico, characterizing it as a 'new assimilation' of the large indigenous population. The government had come up with a new model for radio broadcasting that gave permits for three low-power stations to be directly run by the community and was funded by the government. But the new top-down approach did not succeed in activating community participation. Instead, the authors argue, the state took use of both multicultural and assimilating policies (Castells-Talens et al. 2009:535).

However, Riggins underlines that media itself is not the only tool for cultural survival. Other political and social factors influence this process (Riggins 1992:276). Similarly, community media cannot be the only solution for a more participatory democracy, which also means that Guatemalan community radio stations cannot solve all social and political conflicts that indigenous people are faced with. After mapping the key issues that are characterizing Guatemala today, my following discussion will examine more closely the challenges, limits and assets Guatemalan community radio stations are faced with. Throughout my analysis, I will connect these issues with more examples from other similar studies on community media.

3. Methodology

I consider this study an *explorative* study of community radio practice in Guatemala, which means that I did not have enough knowledge about the dynamics of the setting and all its central issues before entering the field (Ryen 2002:98). This, however, would probably have been the case for any Western researcher going into the Guatemalan community radio field, as there are several complex dynamics to take into account. I came to Guatemala with some knowledge of its history, culture and the current situation for indigenous people as well as the current indigenous radio movement lobbying for a community media law. I wanted to explore this alternative media channel by focusing especially on the radio practitioners' experiences, their working methods and role understanding, and the role of indigenous community radio in the local public sphere. Various earlier studies on community radio had given me a notion of common research methods, but as I had never visited Guatemala or the community radio field, I entered with an open mind, only knowing that my research focus could evolve and change over time.

This means that the research process has been *emergent* (Creswell 2007:39), in that it carries an open research design that might change through the various phases and after the researcher has entered the field. The questions, data collection, places visited – everything is likely to be modified during the process.

In this chapter I will outline the methodological decisions I made and how I conducted my study.

3.1 Qualitative research

An emergent research design is a common characteristic of *qualitative research.* Qualitative methods are fruitful when examining complex issues, with details that can only be collected through direct contact with people in their natural surroundings. With a primary theoretical frame in mind, the researcher lets individuals share their stories in their own voice and wants to understand "the contexts or settings in which participants in a study address a problem or issue" (Creswell 2007:40). The researcher starts with an *inductive* approach: I began exploring the phenomena with certain assumptions and a theoretical basis but without having determined specific categories for the analysis. What I encountered through this would confirm, deny or add new issues to the research (Postholm 2010:36, Patton 2002:41).

Scholars studying alternative media have mostly used qualitative methods, as they are often interested in the experiences and perspectives of media producers and participants (Atton 2009:273). The participatory nature of alternative media signifies that there are dynamics and social relations that must be taken into consideration in order to understand its practice, which might be hard for quantitative surveys to capture.

The qualitative interview

The qualitative interview is one way of obtaining data about the dynamics in community media practice. In media studies, qualitative interviews are common when analyzing the production and reception of media content, or the activities and strategies that media workers employ (Østbye et al. 2002:99-100).

During my fieldwork, I used qualitative interviews as my main approach. My data collection was primarily done through *semistructured interviews,* which in short, can be described as a "purposeful conversation" (Erlandson et al. in Rye 2002:99). It follows a flexible and conversational structure while, at the same time, having had determined the main questions and subject areas in an *interview guide* prior to the interview (Rye 2002:99). When interviewing several informants, the interview guide helps maintain a certain systematic and comprehensive approach "by delimiting in advance the issues to be explored" (Patton 2002:343). However, by letting the interviewee – who I will refer to as the *informant* – also control the interaction, a semistructured interview can capture aspects, perspectives and spontaneous reactions that are unknown to the researcher. This requires that the researcher carries an open mind and is not too dependent on his interview guide (Rye 2002:99). With my research questions in mind, I constructed my interview guide (see Appendix C) based on the most important factors I wanted us to talk about. In total, I conducted 13 semistructured interviews, where I outlined one general interview guide – meant for the radio staff – and changed it when talking to other informants.

For practical and situational reasons, I had three more *informal conversational interviews*, an interview style especially common in fieldwork (Patton 2002:342). Also defined as *unstructured interviews,* this style is more flexible and spontaneous than the semistructured interview, often without predetermined questions. It is more responsive to unpredictable situations, which was why these interviews developed while I was interacting and having conversations that turned out to be of more value. For instance, one of my first contacts was interviewed this way through three different meetings I had with him in

different settings and situations. It felt inappropriate to record these conversations; instead I took notes during and after. A challenge for unstructured interviews is that it can be difficult to structure the data afterwards, as they all will differ distinctively in style and content (ibid:342-343). In my case, however, this method primarily helped me gain access to facts and viewpoints about the radio movement and the situation for indigenous people in Guatemala - information that has functioned as additional data material along with other interviews, literature and Internet-based sources.

The fieldwork

Patton (2002) underlines the importance of bearing in mind that an interview will always report on the informants' perceptions. By making the researcher's own perceptions part of the final material, "observers can arrive at a more comprehensive view of the setting being studied than if forced to rely entirely on secondhand reports through interviews" (Patton 2002:264). Although this data will also be selective and more subjective, impressions throughout a fieldwork period can help the researcher understand the context and reveal things that people in the setting are not aware of themselves (ibid:262). Therefore, bearing in mind the cultural and political context for indigenous people and the complex nature of community media and its strong connection with its surroundings, I consciously used what Patton defines as a "direct personal experience and engagement" strategy (ibid): going into the field and not limiting myself to interviews only. I tried to explore the Guatemalan culture as far as I could, and during my 10 weeks of travels around Guatemala I made regular field notes and consciously focused on my intent of being there.

However, my fieldwork observations cannot be used as data from a *participant field observation*, a research method traditionally used in anthropology studies. In media studies, field observations are often used when studying the processes of media production or media reception (Østbye et al. 2002:107-108). In my case, it would require more systematic observation and field notes from a longer time period, for instance, spending more time at each radio station or one specific village. Nonetheless, living and interacting with the locals and attending radio seminars and community meetings provided me with valuable observations that I believe was strictly necessary in order to complete this study. It enriched my findings, strengthened the theoretical and cultural understanding I obtained from other studies and theories and helped me conduct better and more effective interviews.

Besides, doing research studies across different cultures requires more methodological

consciousness (Rye 2002:231). Although I was not in Guatemala to study the people or the culture itself, or daily life in an indigenous village, all these issues are closely linked to the characteristics of community radio. Daily communication and power relations were thus important aspects I had to take into account. I will reflect more upon any potential cultural barriers below.

3.2 Out in the field

Although I was familiar with parts of Central America, I had never been to Guatemala. I believe this made me more open, discovery-oriented and inductive in my research process as I had few prior perceptions or biases. When I first arrived, I settled in a small, poor rural village to have Spanish lessons and to get an introduction to the more rural life of Guatemala – the context in which community radio stations belong. In this village there was no community radio station, only two very religious radio stations, which is very common in Guatemala. As a result, my stay here not only improved my knowledge of Guatemala, but it also gave me a better basis for my research focus. I observed and asked as much as I could about Guatemalan village life, lifestyle, mindset and media use throughout my stay. The Spanish school further taught me more about the Guatemalan cultural and social landscape. I gained a whole new insight to the situation and realized that my preparations had already started.

Field access

By being an outsider with a limited time period, I knew it could be a risky path I had chosen. However, I encountered no problems getting access to the community radio field and the indigenous communities. On the contrary, people seemed to be honored and grateful that a far-away stranger was curious about their work. At every radio station I visited, I was welcomed as one of them, and no one had any inquiries or problems concerning my visit or interviews. While asking for informants, I carefully explained my overall intentions and that the interviews, if desirable, would be used anonymously. But generally people were more than willing to participate. Moreover, I was not the first foreign visitor. A number of students, researchers and NGO workers had engaged with the radio stations earlier, which might have made access to the practitioners easier.

My first informants

Before choosing your main informants, Rye emphasizes the importance of starting with someone from inside the field that can give you an introduction to the inner life and culture of what you will study, to come up with suggestions or simply be a door opener to the field (Rye 2002:90). My first two contacts, whom I had e-mailed before arriving in Guatemala, turned out to be very central within the radio movement and could give me a very useful introduction. One of them comes from the US-based indigenous rights organization *Cultural Survival* and was especially helpful in terms of language, culture barriers and other observations that he, as a 'Westerner', could explain to me. The other contact is the leader of *Mujb'ab'l'yol*, one of the community radio associations. Separately, they took me to various radio stations and explained about their challenges, improvements, plans and working methods. I also participated at a radio-training workshop for radio stations involved in the movement, attended the opening day of a new radio station and went to a regional conference in the Northwestern part of Guatemala, where a number of regional Congressmen had been invited.

Consequently, by moving on with the information I had received from these first two contacts, I had partly chosen my final selection through the so-called 'snowball method', where your first contact(s) connects you with another contact, and so forth (Gentikow 2005:80). I am aware of the impact these informants might have had on how my research focus evolved after this, with them giving me advice on where to go and who to talk to or by consciously leaving out certain information (Rye 2002:90). But first of all, they became crucial guides to an unknown field and presented to me more key sources. Besides, given the small size of the community radio movement, I would most probably have met several of the same people even without this introduction.

Selecting radio stations

While the movement itself is small, the introduction I got from my first informants demonstrated the diversity of the Guatemalan community radio landscape; the quality and characteristics of the radio stations vary significantly from village to village. The coordinators estimate that although there might be from 500 to 1000 radio stations claiming to be community radio stations, only 20 to 30 stations would pass for what they see as 'real' community radio today. This number is probably debatable, and I was conscious of consequences their judgments could have on my own choices. When the core of the community radio movement collaborates with less than 200 of these radio stations, and my

two contacts had only visited less than half of them, how can they be sure that the rest are merely religious or commercial? However, choosing between a myriad of radio stations was impossible without help and advice from my informants.

In an effort to grasp some of the diversity and because the radio stations in general are very small[8], I found it necessary to interview radio staff from more than one village. In total, I visited 13 different radio stations during my stay in Guatemala, among these also Catholic and Evangelical stations. Based on advice and contacts I had received during various gatherings, I decided to find informants from four different radio stations (in addition to one informant from another radio station for a pilot interview). I chose some of the more developed radio stations as these to some extent represent what the whole movement aims for, and what they wish more radio stations to become like. They are all looked upon as community radio stations, but differ from each other both in location and characteristics. All of the stations are primarily airing in their Maya languages and playing only traditional marimba music. They are quite *rural* – some more Western-influenced than others - located in small indigenous towns, despite the fact that three of the villages lie less than two hours from Guatemala's biggest cities. For practical reasons, I chose radio stations located in the west and northwestern part of Guatemala (see map of radio stations, Appendix A).

In order to get to know this kind of media channel, which differs drastically from any other radio station I had seen before, I interacted with the radio staff - sometimes also outside the studio, as they are all regular indigenous village people with the radio station as their hobby. At nearly every station I was 'interviewed' on-air by one of the volunteers or asked to send a greeting to the audience. This was an interesting experience from researcher's point of view, as I then personally experienced how they would relate to a visitor and how they would ask questions.

At two of the radio station locations I stayed one week in each village and learned more about the radio's role in the community. I was able to interview more radio practitioners in these villages; more than half of the radio volunteers in my data selection come from these two radio stations. I chose this kind of selection because it allowed me more insight into the actual operation and relations within the radio stations and the communities, which broadened my horizon deeper than by only just listening to the volunteers' own stories. As

[8] Due to lack of resources and time, the number of radio staff is likely to vary from 4 to 20 volunteers, where some might participate only once a week. In addition, some radio stations make space for other local actors to master their own radio programming such as health centers, environmental organizations, etc.

we shall see, my analysis includes more illustrating examples from these villages, but, mentioned above about my fieldwork, field notes from these experiences cannot draw any final conclusions and have only been used as a contextual supplement to the qualitative interviews.

Pilot interview

To test my interview guide, I conducted a *pilot interview,* which is recommended in order to check practical circumstances, interview length, your role as interviewee and to test whether the method will give the information you expect (Genticow 2005:82). I interviewed a radio volunteer at one of the smaller community radio stations. As semistructured interviews allow flexibility, the pilot interview did not lead to any significant changes in my interview guide; however, listening and transcribing the interview immediately afterwards helped me reflect upon and review my role as an interviewer. As his thoughts, observations and knowledge were very insightful, I have included this interview in my data material.

The locutores

In total, I interviewed 12 radio volunteers, so-called *locutores* [9]. The purpose of qualitative interviewing is not to gather large data that will give you specific statistic knowledge but to get more personal access to each informant's life-world. As a consequence, the selection is smaller. Most important is the information you gather, not the number of interviews (Rye 2002:84-85). Each informant is interviewed thoroughly and becomes crucial for the data material (Gentikow 2005:47).

When choosing your informants, Trost (acc. to ibid:85) recommends looking for those who are relevant for the research questions and who can ensure certain heterogeneity. My selection consists of village people of different ages from 17 to 72. Five of them are young women, 17 to 23 years old. I argue that, as far as the scope of this study allows, the group represents a lot of the heterogeneity of volunteers at Guatemala's community radio stations. In general, men make up the majority, but an increasing number of female volunteers are now getting involved as well. Most of the women are quite young, primarily because they have more computer skills and education. Among these 12 volunteers are also four male station *coordinators*. Two of them are partly employed by the indigenous rights organization Cultural Survival and are central actors in the community radio movement. Thus, they could

provide me with useful knowledge about the situation for the movement as well.

'Expertise informants'

When selecting informants for qualitative interviews, it is further recommended not to have more than 20 informants, as too much data will probably be too hard to handle and result in a superficial or incomplete analysis (Gentikow 2005:78). Apart from the locutores, I have included six other informants[10] in my data material in order to strengthen my data material from a different or wider perspective. Following the advice about not investing too much time on more peripheral informants and in order to avoid data abundance (Rye 2002:92), I chose the most central sources I was able to meet during my fieldwork.

In addition to my two first contacts, I decided to interview two professional journalists with knowledge about journalism in Guatemala and the alternative journalism field. In one, I had a shorter interview with an American-Guatemalan woman who was working on implementing a citizen journalism project in Guatemala as part of her Fulbright scholarship (Andrade 2010). She had also had workshops for radio staff people and had both professional and personal knowledge about the situation in Guatemala, its journalism issues and the Guatemalan media landscape. The other journalist is a Guatemalan working for the biggest national newspaper *Prensa Libre*, while also leading one of the eight community radio associations. Apart from giving me a more in-depth understanding of issues concerning community radio, he had personal experience with the reality for journalists in Guatemala. In addition he volunteers at a community radio station with his own weekly radio show, which is aired simultaneously on 12 radio stations around lake Atitlan. So far, this show stands out in many ways in the community radio landscape, as it carries characteristics that very clearly touch upon the question of deliberative media channels. Its characteristics will therefore be mentioned in my analysis.

During my radio station visits, I also met a person who for many years has engaged in Maya political and cultural affairs. He is an important cultural figure in his village, and has his own a daily radio show about Maya history and traditions. In addition to the literature I have used, he could provide me with more insight about the importance of the revitalization of Maya culture and traditions as well as questions about political challenges for the indigenous population in general.

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[9] Registered as LO1 - LO12 in my references.
[10] Registered as IN1 – IN5 in my references.

Documents

In order to test correlation and to strengthen the quality of my findings, I got access to certain documents in order to test any correlation. I received a copy of the official law proposal and got access to the newest draft of basic requirements for a community radio, which is only meant for internal use (see Appendix B). I have used these documents as additional sources, while other documents have only been used as contextual insights and not analyzed or included as sources for my data material. Among other things, I received editions of *Todos Hablamos,* a new two-page bulletin made by and for the community radio movement, which includes short news, presentations of radio stations, and practical advice for the radio practitioners. These bulletins primarily helped me check any facts, names, and other useful information, and gave me insight to other happenings in the Guatemalan community radio world. Newer editions of the bulletin were e-mailed to me after I had left the field.

Collecting and organizing the data

All interviews were recorded except from my more open conversations with one of the radio coordinators and the interview with the American-Guatemalan journalist, which for practical reasons was done over the telephone[11]. In order to stay in the correct environment, the interviews with locutores were usually done at the radio stations, which was the most convenient place for them as well. The interviews lasted from approximately 20 to 60 minutes. Conversations with the coordinator of a radio station usually lasted longer than with the locutores, as we also talked about the radio station's strategy, the community radio movement, the legalization problem and other issues they had more knowledge about.

When I left the field and transcribed all interviews, I reviewed my data to develop a better and more distanced overview of what I had found. This is also necessary in order to point out the most interesting findings and to discover any weaknesses (Gentikow 2005:115). Through an *inductive data analysis* (Creswell 2007:38), I organized them into six themes that somehow was in line with my research questions and that seemed to appear across all the sources. These themes were later reduced to five and touched upon the theoretical basis as well as what other studies on community media have emphasized. Comparing with and drawing lines to former findings and perspectives might also strengthen the quality of my own results – to the extent that I can reach any conclusions.

[11] To avoid any misunderstandings in the telephone interview, we agreed that I would send any quotes from my notes if they would be used in my paper.

3.3 Methodological challenges

This leads us to the implications and challenges in qualitative research. Instead of statistics, qualitative research uses *soft* data. The results are based on interpretations, and conclusions are not final (Gentikow 2005:36-37). Qualitative analysis will find patterns as well as ”vagaries, uncertainties, and ambiguities” (Patton 2002:437), which traditionally has raised questions about the *universality* of qualitative studies and about the criteria of *reliability* and *validity,* which are seen as mandatory requirements in quantitative studies (Gentikow 2005:56). In what way can my data material and results be reliable in terms of objectivity and quality? And in what way can this limited study result in any valid conclusions based on the research questions?

According to Gentikow, qualitative studies should reflect the *complexity* of a phenomena and rather open up for further discussions instead of coming up with any “clear definite answers” (ibid:63, my transl.). She defines this goal for qualitative studies as *analytic complexity*. We should always aim for reliable and valid findings; by acknowledging the incompleteness of the qualitative methodology, analytic complexity reflects “the complexity of the phenomena” (ibid).

Bearing in mind both the limited time period in Guatemala, as well as cultural and language barriers, I am aware of the uncertainties and ambiguities qualitative studies bring. I will now reflect more upon the challenges I met.

The data selection

A look at the data selection of a qualitative study is especially important when aiming for analytic complexity. For practical reasons, I selected the radio stations based on what I had learned from the coordinators. The radio stations I chose represents a small percentage of the total number and only a small part of the diverse characteristics. If I had chosen radio stations more at the periphery of the movement, I might have found different views and other results. Likewise, more sources on the periphery could have given me notions about other people’s impressions of community radio to see whether the informants from *within* the movement are correct about this media’s significance. However, media reception was not the main purpose of this study. At the same time, it was by connecting with people more at the centre of the movement that I could learn as much as possible during these 10 weeks.

I am also aware that the locutores’ perceptions might be colored by what they have learned on various radio workshops and seminars, or what they have been told by the more

experienced coordinators and leaders, more than their individual reflections. Many of them have lacked education and skills and frequently gave similar answers when they referred to what they had learned from the community radio movement. As we shall see, however, this accounts for several community radio practitioners in Guatemala so far and naturally became part of what I was looking for.[12]

Language challenges

Spanish is my third language, and I must take into account any communication challenges that appeared during interviews and radio visits. For instance, my limited language skills might have prevented certain follow-up questions that could have provided me with more in-depth interviews. Some questions were also misunderstood, although this was resolved once I repeated or clarified the question. Another language barrier was the fact that all the locutores use a Maya language as their first language. The Spanish vocabulary is limited among some, which might have prevented them from answering more fully. One informant, who is illiterate and speaks less Spanish, chose to end our conversation earlier because he felt shy or embarrassed when he didn't understand one of my last questions. In general, however, I experienced rather few such communication problems. The dialogues evolved more or less naturally, although listening to the interviews confirms that I was more attached to my interview guide during the first interviews.

The researcher and the informant

Reflections about the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee have received more attention in recent discussions concerning qualitative interviewing (see Creswell 2007:140). In contrast with quantitative research, the qualitative researcher is more personally involved, which will affect the research process and the informant. However, qualitative interviewing also offers the informant more power and control during the conversation (Gentikow 2005:48-50).

A common challenge in qualitative studies is the hidden power-relations between the researcher and informant (ibid:49). Apart from always maintaining a certain control over the interview situation, the researcher often represents a higher social level. This was not the case when interviewing some of the coordinators and the professional journalists, as they had

[12] Also, I was lucky to get hold of another study after my fieldwork. Henderson (2008) - although having a different approach and focus – found similar results concerning some issues, through interviews with

more experience or academic expertise with the topics than myself. But when visiting the radio stations, I clearly represented the 'richer', 'Western' world. I entered a field where hierarchical power relations are strong. I was conscious of not making the locutores feel insecure in this situation and instead focused on showing how *they* had something to teach *me*, how *they* knew something that was very valuable and important – which was also the case. I think this was the best way of entering their world - with respect, curiosity and admiration. In this way, the conversation became more as a dialogue between two equal parties (ibid:50).

The radio practitioners were used to foreign visitors from the US and Europe. And for indigenous people in Guatemala, aid and support from the outside have been crucial and more trustworthy than help from their own government. Although I carefully explained my purpose with the interviews, some might have misunderstood what exactly I wanted to find out, and why I was there. "If you are not from an organization, then why are you here?", they asked me. Some probably assumed that since I came from Norway I might be able to help them out. The financial problems were often mentioned. "We only need 3000 quetzales a month, if someone could help us with that, then that would be great…".

As I interacted personally with some of my informants during my fieldwork, another challenge will be to obtain the balance between emotional closeness and distance. As Gentikow also points out, I usually avoided this because of the distancing effect the interview situation itself creates (Gentikow 2005:50). For some of the locutores, however, the interview situation was an unusual setting to be put in, and some might have felt uncomfortable or acted more formal during the interview – especially once I signaled that the recorder was on. Nonetheless, this impact seemed to fade away after a while. They are also well accustomed to express themselves on air through their work in the radio, which I believe further helped the situation.

Cultural barriers: A hermeneutic challenge

A final challenge concerns the uncertainties and ambiguities of my interpretations and prior understandings. Coming from a different and 'un-indigenous' culture naturally created a cultural barrier that might have limited me to successfully maintain a *hermeneutic* approach when analyzing my interviews.

Guatemalan locutores.

The hermeneutic tradition is the classic method for understanding text, where 'text' is also understood as verbal expressions. A hermeneutic approach emphasizes on the role and relation to the text, where by looking at both the constituents and the totality of the text and its context, the goal is to arrive on a mutually enriching understanding (Gentikow 2005:145). When following what I have defined as an emergent research design, I was very conscious on trying to see things from the indigenous worldview, revealing their ideas and perceptions. I became quite emotionally engaged in their fight for the community media law and for the injustice they experience in their own society, and in this way expanding my own horizon of understanding. However, despite how much we try becoming like them, we will always carry our "historical and cultural experiences" (Østbye et al. 2002:70, my transl.), which can limit our understanding and interpretation of the context. The hermeneutic tradition defines this as prejudices or presuppositions. A qualitative researcher must carry a constant self-reflection, by reflecting upon my prejudices and role in the context (ibid). According to Gentikow, self-reflection can also help maintaining the ideal of analytic complexity of the qualitative study (Gentikow 2005:63).

Philosopher Paul Feyerabend goes as far as disclaiming any use of method or framework in the process of trying to understand a different culture. Only through *open exchange,* by aiming to become as the other, the researcher can fully understand the new context and avoid letting one side become the 'stronger party'. His following description can give an idea of what it means to fully expand our horizon of understanding: "The participants get immersed into each others way of thinking, feeling, perceiving to such an extent that their ideas, perceptions, worldviews may be entirely changed" (Feyerabend in Næss 1999:58). Although his theories have met criticism, he touches upon a central challenge with my own study. Looking back, as well as listening to my interviews, I have also noticed incidents where I would have had chance to move further, by asking a follow-up question that could have brought me to a deeper level of understanding of the dynamics in the field or the life-world of my informants. However, situational, personal or cultural barriers hindered me from getting there.

But to what extent is it actually possible for a Western outsider to fully become like a Guatemalan indigenous person or a Guatemalan community radio volunteer? This cannot and has not been the intention with this study, and would certainly be more appropriate for an anthropological approach. Time limitations and the scope of my thesis also set premises for how far I could go.

Nevertheless, by carrying a constant self-reflection of my interpretations and choices, I will argue that the methodological choices and research design I have described in this chapter qualify to the goal of validity, reliability and analytical complexity of a qualitative study.

4. Background: Democratizing Guatemala

Being a country filled with sharp contrasts between lowlands and highlands, the indigenous population and a Spanish-speaking population, and the different lives of city dwellers and small farmers in remote areas, the description of Latin America as a "kaleidoscopic mixture of races and peoples" (Skidmore & Smith 1997:421) certainly counts for Guatemala. Ekern & Bendiksby characterizes the capital Guatemala City as "a modern island in an ocean of traditional village life" (Ekern & Bendiksby 2001:2). The cultural contrasts and the ethnic problems these gaps may cause are also central issues for several countries around the world today. So is the communicative gap that appears between the dominating public sphere and the smaller, more community-based spheres.

As Putzel & van der Zwan underlines, "it is quite clear, yet often ignored, that media systems are in fact a reflection of a particular historical context" (Putzel & van der Zwan in Ibrahim 2009:613). As we shall see, the historical context can clearly be reflected when exploring the Guatemala community radio field. Before looking more into this field, I will therefore map a brief overview of political, social and cultural issues in Guatemala today – with a special emphasis on the media landscape – and by this mapping key issues required for further discussion.

4.1 A Multicultural Society

Guatemala's population has grown rapidly the last decades, with more than 13 million people compared to only 2.8 millions in 1950 (Ekern & Bendiksby 2001: 6). Unfortunately, the country has not witnessed a similar economic growth; with the result that poverty remains – especially among the large indigenous population. Often referred to as the *Mayas*, they constitute nearly 60 percent of the population in total, which further implies that more than half of the population speaks one of the 22 politically recognized languages as their mother tongue (Bendiksby 2001:156, IWGIA 2010). By representing the poorer part of the population, they further become most hit by Guatemala's unstable geology, where volcano eruptions, heavy rain, tropical storms and hurricane risks belong to the everyday life of Guatemalans.

Colonial history, along with modernization, urbanization and strongman rule, has eroded

much of former regional and provincial barriers in Latin America. Guatemala has a long history of strong dictatorship, and has witnessed several radical political shifts, which gradually has changed the traditional balance between society and the Maya world. Through centuries, a prosperous Spanish-speaking elite, typically perceiving the indigenous population as uncivilized, has dominated political life in Guatemala. By exerting them as labor on the many large plantations and trying to assimilate the indigenous population through Catholicism and Spanish culture and language, the elite developed what one may call a *politics of assimilation* (Bendiksby 2001:156). The national identity promoted by the state defined the *Ladino* culture as the 'universal' culture and through this excluding half of the country's citizens, by defining them as "less worthy because of cultural belonging" (Solstad 2001:88, my transl.). However, the politics of assimilation has only partly succeeded, mainly because of concentrated populations in isolated areas and the preservation of traditional social identities. According to Calder, "what allowed Mayan cultural survival was their will to resist and the long-term ineffectiveness of the […] Spanish-speaking authorities" (Calder 2004:94). Guatemala is said to be one of few Latin American areas "where Indian cultures seem likely to survive for long" (Skidmore & Smith 1997:422).

The Agreement on Identity and Rights for Indigenous People

Self-government and political participation are two important issues for indigenous people in Guatemala today, and the question of how state-owned institutions should reflect the country's ethnic diversity is a key issue (Midrés 2001:63). Increasing awareness of excluding indigenous people because of ethnic identity led to a shift in Maya identity in the mid-1970s. This further led to socioeconomic and political mobilization and the establishment of various Maya organizations, which became known as the *Maya movement*[13] (Calder 2004:93, Ekern 2001:128). *El Acuerdo sobre identidad y derechos de los pueblos indigenas*[14] was signed in 1995 and implemented in the 1996 Peace Accords, and is mostly based on proposals from the Maya movement. This agreement defines Guatemala as a multiethnic, multicultural and multilingual nation, recognizing indigenous people's rights to their own identity, cultural expressions and participation in political decisions. Various national or cultural-based identities shall be equal in relation to the state (Solstad 2001:89). In 1997, Guatemala ratified

[13] Also referred to as the *Pan-Mayan Movement.*
[14] In English: The Agreement on Identity and Rights of Indigenous people.

the ILO Convention 169, which further argues for the actual ”implementation, practice, and promotion of the rights of indigenous people” (Montejo 1997). The ILO Convention can thus be used as an important tool in negotiations concerning special indigenous issues such as the right to land and territories[15]. It states that recognition is not sufficient; indigenous people should take part in “the development of policies and programs that concern our lives and the organization of our communities” (ibid). By signing this paper, the state acknowledges indigenous people’s right to control their economic and cultural development, and their right to take part in national and regional decisions (Bendiksby 2001:160-161).

On top of this, the *United Nations Declaration of Rights of Indigenous People* was adopted in 2007, “*recognizing* the urgent need to respect and promote the inherent rights of indigenous peoples” (UN 2007). Although much remains to be done in order to more effectively advance the implementation of the declaration (UN 2009), it is in the long term expected to improve their situation globally.

Implementation of the Peace Accords

“Instead of Peace *Accords*, we got Peace *Records*”, concluded a leading figure of the community radio movement, in his opening speech at a regional conference aimed at convincing regional Congressmen to support them[16]. Community radio workers and Maya leaders responded with chuckle and applause. His statement clearly has a point, as only small parts of the provisions made in the Peace Accords have been carried through so far. Especially promises concerning indigenous rights have been least implemented (Carey 2004:71). After interviewing a number of Guatemalan scholars within the field, Suchenwich emphasizes lack of political will as the main reason for this (2006:46-47). Furthermore, the military has openly showed resistance to parts of the agreement (Carey 2004:74).

Promises by the government do not necessarily give the indigenous population “a blind faith in political, economic, social, and cultural processes that have excluded and exploited them for years” (ibid:90). On top of this, due to illiteracy and inadequate information services many indigenous people are not even familiar with essential parts of the Agreement,

[15] Together with language, the importance of land and territories are the two most significant markers of cultural identity for indigenous populations. They feel strongly connected with their land, which gives land a particular spiritual significance. Distribution of land has been a source of social conflict in Guatemala for centuries. Traditionally, land was farmed and harvested communally, whereas today a small percentage of the population owns most of the land. (UN 2009).

[16] Based on my own observations on the conference that was held on May 14th 2010 in the city of Huehuetenango (in the Northwestern highlands). The movement had gambled a lot of resources on arranging

which further shows how a structural exclusion of indigenous people prevails.

Racial ambivalence

Since the 1980s, the Guatemalan society has gone through drastic transformations with the increasing collective Maya actions. They have developed from being weak grassroots organizations to "high-profile national-level negotiations" (Hale 2006:202), connected with and supported by a global civil society. The dominant ideology of Ladinos being modern and in progress and Mayas as "almost irredeemably backward" (ibid:4) has weakened after the Maya movement took lead.

Nevertheless, history has left its mark on Guatemalan society, and views stemming from colonial time are still prominent. Hale defines this as *racial ambivalence.* Although Ladinos encourage for intercultural dialogue and acknowledging indigenous people's rights, they are still maintaining "a strong psychic investment in their dominance and privilege in relation to Indians" (Hale 2006:19). And although Ladinos are endorsing democratic principles and have no interest in going back to the more racist past, some also fear that their own dominance will decrease or even slip away with the growing Maya movement.

Racial ambivalence shines through on many areas. Despite the last decades' popular resistance to authoritarian forces, indigenous people in Guatemala are still experiencing exclusion from political participation (Bendiksby 2001:156). The language is a critical barrier, due to the number of non-Spanish speakers and that around 40 percent of the adult population are illiterate (UN Data 2007). How to even publish a letter to the editor if you cannot either read or write Spanish? Besides, there are few Mayas represented in the police and other official positions, which is also holding back efforts to overcome cultural barriers (Ekern & Bendiksby 2001:17). Guatemala further struggles with comprehensive violations on human rights and corruption, and an ineffective law system and police forces limit the protection of citizens (Yashar 2003:259).

High illiteracy rates, indigenous languages, isolated living situations, lack of efficient public transportation, an "inadequate and Eurocentric education system" (Carey 2004:76) and lack of trust in the state further gives Guatemala "one of the lowest indices of electoral participation in the world" (ibid). Admittedly, with the lack of cooperation, lack of more 'Maya-friendly' information about the content of the Peace Accords, many issues remain

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this event and inviting Congressmen.

unsolved – including the right to community media.

The Lack of a Unified Public Sphere

The Guatemalan historian Marta Casáus Arzú has named the Guatemalan indigenous person an "imaginary citizen" (Arzú in Bendiksby 2001:157). By this she means that he or she is judiciary and formally equaled and identical, while at the same time being fundamentally different politically, economically and culturally from the dominant Spanish-speaking population. Ekern speaks about a *duality* deriving from colonial history, where "two political systems have continued to live side by side" (Ekern 2005:3). This makes Guatemala "a dual political institution, incorporating two distinct but overlapping communities" (ibid)[17].

According to Ekern, what seems to be the political challenge is how to 'mayanize' the political nationalism and create a bond between the local society and the national society – a bond that breaks with the traditional hierarchal society stemming from colonial times. If a more united, national community is needed, there must exist something that somehow unites the citizens (Ekern 2001:127). In this connection, a challenge for Guatemala and other multicultural societies is that one cannot speak of one shared identity, but rather several different traditions and values, spread in different, separated local communities. This is also seen in the 400 different Maya organizations, which shows a very split movement with rich, diverse institutional expressions, views and ideologies (ibid, IN1, IN5).

From a participatory democratic perspective, a multicultural society needs separate public spheres where groups can develop "their own collective identities" (NOU 1999:41), while at the same time show consideration for, listen to, and communicate with the minorities. The large public sphere and the smaller local spheres must interact in a way that can provide "a minimum of shared language and understanding" (ibid). In parallel, Solstad argues that if Guatemala's cultural and ethnic diversity is recognized and implemented, shaping the grounds for a shared national identity, this will in turn increase participation in society (Solstad 2001:91). However, how does the Guatemalan media system facilitate for this diversity?

4.2 The Guatemalan Media Landscape

According to Leonardo Ferreira, freedom of expression in Latin America today faces two

[17] A similar duality is seen in the religious organization of Maya communities, which uses elements of both

major challenges: technology and more democratic governments (Ferreira 2006:235). Despite the later democratization and more freedom of the press, this has not reduced poverty or increased ”access for dissenting voices or tolerance for diverse ideas” (ibid). Most Latin American media systems started in the ‘oligarchic[18] period’ (Waisbord in Rockwell & Janus 2003:104) and despite efforts for community media systems, it all seems to end up in the hands of large media conglomerates, controlled by smaller elites using repressive methods deriving from an authoritarian past. The problem has been – and still is – ”how to put the mass media and other communications to work for the benefit of the majority (Ferreira 2006:216).

Self-censorship, corruption, official limitations, violence and blackmailing are some of the challenges in the Central American media today (ibid:237). In their analysis of media power in the region, Rockwell & Janus concludes that “all too often, under the cover of peace accords or masked by the hype that comes with more commercial media systems, the media in Central America have only superficially appeared to be changing in ways that would bolster democracy” (Rockwell & Janus 2003:11). These characteristics clearly describe the overall tendencies of Guatemalan media system, where traces of the oligarchic period are still present. I will now map the main characteristics of this landscape.

Privatized and conservative media

Although freedom of expression is guaranteed in the Guatemalan Constitution, economical power and commercial interests easily threaten this ideal. The Mexican media baron Angel Gonzáles, described as “a politically connected entrepreneur who favors conservative perspectives” (Freedom House 2010) controls most of the cinemas, four of the country’s six television stations and 21 commercial radio stations. He also controls much of the broadcast systems in all Central American countries except Panama and Honduras (Rockwell & Janus 2003:94). In the words of Rockwell & Janus, his monopoly “represents both the older, closed authoritarian system of the past and the dark side of media globalization” (ibid:93). Gonzalez’s operations are based on cooperation with the government, where any news and information programs on his stations “carry bland items that either pose no challenge to the president or favor whichever party holds power” (ibid:94). Rockwell & Janus further

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Christian (Catholic or Evangelical Protestant) and Maya religious practices (Ekern 2005:3, Calder 2004:93).

describe the local news programs of his stations as one of the most amateurish and worst in all of Central America: "These low-cost efforts at information programming often appear designed to keep the Guatemalan audience uninterested in politics" (ibid).

Due to the low Spanish literacy rate and a rugged, mountainous terrain, radio is still the most popular medium in Guatemala. Two other large ownership groups[19] controls around 65 percent of the radio audience together with Gonzalez. With these powerful chains, smaller alternative radio stations struggle to survive. Guatemala further has one of the most liberal Telecommunications law in the world, after it was transformed and liberalized in 1996. This opened up for privatization of telecommunication services and the management of the whole radio spectrum (Bull 2002:234), which has strong implication for community radio operations. I will explain this in more detail below.

The printed media[20] is also dominated by a small group of conservative businessmen, "with generally centrist or conservative editorial stances" (Freedom House 2010). The Guatemalan press generally face low circulation figures, which illustrates their tendency to address the elite, and in that way "the oligarchy or members of the business class who seek to open the system and diffuse the oligarchic power structure" (Rockwell & Janus 2003:105).

The situation for journalists

Furthermore, the security situation for media workers is critical. In their latest report on freedom of expression in Guatemala, Freedom House found that although independent media are now relatively free to express diverse opinions and to criticize the government, "violence against the press by drug traffickers and other criminal organizations continued and was rarely prosecuted, encouraging self-censorship [in 2009]" (Freedom House 2010). Very little investigative reporting can be found in the media. Although a new law which guarantees access to public information took effect in 2009, journalists still experience difficulties in getting access, particularly those reporting about corruption cases in the province areas

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[18] *Oligarchy* means "rule by a few members of a community or group" (Encyclopedia.com). When speaking about governments, oligarchy refers to "government by a few, usually the rich, for their own advantage" (ibid). In the Latin American context, oligarchy refers to the long tradition of authoritarian rule.

[19] The prosperous Archila family owns a dozens of radio stations that are all based in the capital. One of them is *Emisoras Unidas,* which media observers still considers as "the best radio outlet for news and information" (Rockwell & Janus 2003: 96). *Radio Grupo Alius,* owned by the Lius family, is the largest radio chain, with 30 stations broadcasting Christian religious programs only.

[20] *Prensa LIbre, Nuestro Diario, La Hora* and *elPeriodico* are the four major daily newspapers. *Prensa Libre* is the most popular, owned by five successful families. The group also owns *Nuestro Diario*, the most tabloid and mainstream newspaper, attracting people of the working class, such as *campesinos*, miners and women (Rockwell & Janus 2003:102).

(ibid). According to the Guatemalan-American journalist Kara Andrade (IN2) and *Prensa Libre* journalist Edgar René Saenz (IN3), a safer environment and laws to protect journalists, as well as better economical support from the government, is needed in order to improve this.

The unsecured conditions for journalists can further be traced to the current situation in neighboring countries Mexico and Honduras. The drug war in Mexico, where journalists have become "direct targets" (Freedom House 2010) of the powerful drug cartels, is also increasingly influencing Guatemalan conditions. Unidentified assailants killed two Guatemalan reporters in 2009, while many media workers received death threats, attacks or intimidations. It remains to see whether the Guatemalan community radio practitioners feel a similar fear due to these circumstances.

Lack of indigenous representation

As the media owners themselves belong to the Guatemalan elite, indigenous issues are rarely interesting for the dominating media. When looking for news reports from the indigenous world you would probably get more luck by searching international media. When Suchenwich examined how indigenous people felt portrayed in the Guatemalan press, her focus groups expressed a strong feeling of being portrayed negatively or as a social problem, whereas Ladinos were given the dominant position. This only maintains "chasms in the society and the feeling of exclusion" (Suchenwich 2006:92).

The level of newspaper consumption among indigenous people is rather low, which the high illiteracy rates and lack of higher education probably can explain. This tendency can further be explained by the institutional culture in Guatemala, which is characterized by strong centralism: The majority of journalists rarely address issues outside the nation's capital (Rockwell & Janus 2003:177). Media outlets, universities and research institutions are all based in the capital and are generally underrepresented by indigenous people and the large rural areas (Suchenwich 2006:20).

4.3 The Need For Community Media

> ”Latin America has developed an excessive commercial view of communication, which has further allowed the accumulation of media conglomerates, with monopolies and oligopolies violating the principle of diversity. This also violates the need to generate a plurality of views, and gives them enormous political power, which seriously affects the democratic model. And it seems as if no politician or public body is willing to take action to correct this phenomenon.” (La Rue 2010b, Op-Ed in *Prensa Libre*, my transl.)

As UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression Frank La Rue points out, the tradition of commercial media systems in Latin America creates consequences for democratic participation. The Guatemalan media landscape clearly illustrates how deep-rooted state-society relations are revealed in media systems. Indeed, today’s commercial media business survives perfectly without “the impoverished and the uneducated” (Ferreira 2006:225) – but democracy and the principle of freedom of expression cannot. As stated by Ferreira, Latin American media legislation has lacked a clear community development perspective. More focus on social responsibility is needed when dealing with media regulation (Ferreira 2006:240-241).

In Guatemala, where radio is the most popular and far-reaching medium, indigenous community radio has a great potential to serve as an important tool and promoter of cultural expression on community level, while at the same time tying rural areas to the rest of the world.

Community radio in Latin America

The diverse and long tradition of radio in Latin America has been aptly described as “a radiophonic salad of state, private, church, university, special interest and indigenous peoples radio stations” (Girard in Pavarala & Malik 2007:21). The use of non-commercial radio stations began already in the 1940s, when the Catholic Church in Colombia experimented with using radio to improve literacy among peasants. The idea of ‘educational radio stations’ expanded to other countries in the region. Around the same time in Bolivia, due to changes in the country and the nationalization of the mines, Bolivian miners started using radio as a tool for mobilization and communication in their struggle for rights.

Indigenous groups, peasants and associations quickly saw the potential for radio as a popular tool in their fight for a better society. The birth of more alternative and radical radio stations in Latin America came in the 1960s and 70s, many directly supported by armed forces and political organizations. And with the rise of social movements and the recovery processes towards democracy from the 1980s and onwards, a new form of alternative radio

was highlighted as the effective communications tool for giving voice to the excluded majority of the political system (Villamayor & Lamas 1998:11). After the war in Guatemala, for instance, new radio stations followed in the footsteps of *La Voz Popular*, an illegal radio station operating during the conflict, becoming the revolutionists' official voice and providing people with information. The war had ended, but people still saw the need for alternative and reliable communication tools (Mujb'ab'l yol 2010).

However, as with Guatemalan community radio, the privatized and corporative media landscape makes it hard for independent radio initiatives in several Latin American countries to gain support for the legislation of socially-owned media specifically aimed at the Maya population.

The Guatemalan Telecommunications Law

In Guatemala, the right to communications media for indigenous people, by making frequencies available for indigenous projects, was pointed out in the Peace Accords[21]. Several radio practitioners started their radio stations based on what they had been informed about this (LO1, LO5, IN5, Henderson 2088:90). However, shortly before the Peace Accords was ratified, Guatemala also passed what is described as "one of the most liberal telecommunications laws in the world" (Bull 2002:234), and which made the telecommunications sector fully deregulated. Unlike other liberal laws, where the state still owns the spectrum and upholds a certain control over the frequency allocations, this reform more or less allowed full control to the private sector by auctioning off legal titles to frequencies. Permission without buying bandwidth will not be granted. Initially, this new system was to benefit the local private sector, but the new law further opened up for foreign national and commercial operators to buy parts of the radio spectrum. The final prices are not regulated, resulting in inconceivably high prices for smaller broadcasters to live up to. This licensing policy has further created an oversaturated radio market (Rockwell & Janus 2003:97). In addition to this, this system has resulted innumerable unregulated radio senders operating on the periphery, the so-called *pirate* stations – religious stations and the community radio stations.

In other words, as mentioned in chapter two, this system makes it hard for specialist

[21] The *Acuerdo sobre identidad y derechos de los pueblos indígenas* (The Agreement on Identity and Rights for Indigenous People) promises to implement "necessary reforms in the current radio communications law in order to make frequencies available for indigenous projects" (p. 7, my transl.).

sectors to develop and secure a strong democratic media system. Analyzing the roots and results of the Telecommunications reform, Henderson concludes that "the costs of enclosing and commodifying resources once held in common has consistently and disproportionately fallen on Guatemala's indigenous population" (Henderson 2008:iii). According to critics, the current law "discriminates against those who lack the financial resources to purchase spectrum title and effectively bars non-profit community radio stations from legal access to the airwaves (ibid: iii-iii).

The rise of the Guatemalan community radio movement

During the following years after the signing of the Peace Accords, small community radio initiatives arouse around Guatemala. To strengthen themselves, the community radio stations loosely organized themselves in various radio associations. National associations such as *Consejo Guatemalteco de Comunicacion Comunitaria* (Guatemalan Community Communications Council), *Asociacion de Radios Comunitarias de Guatemala* (Guatemalan Association of Community Radio in Guatemala) and regional associations have for many years lobbied to carry through a law that recognizes community radio for indigenous people. These associations, some falling apart or partnering with another association, had until the recent years limited contact with each other. However, what is referred to as *El movimiento de las radios comunitarias* (the community radio movement) has now strongly expanded its mobilization efforts and consists of around 170 to 200 radio stations[22] located around the country (Cultural Survival 2010a). As they have been operating 'illegally', several have had their equipment confiscated or have been forced to shut down. Commercial radio stations have continuously run negative campaigns against the 'pirate stations' (Cultural Survival 2010c).

I have now mapped an overview of the political, cultural and social context in which community radio practitioners operate. The context reveals complex barriers, which are therefore important to have in mind when digging further into the world of Guatemalan community radio. Furthermore, the media landscape they wish to change and become part of is not transformed overnight. In the following chapter, I will take a closer look at the situation for the Guatemalan community radio movement.

[22] The total number is a bit unclear, as both my informants and the information I have gathered from Internet sources suggest different numbers – starting from 172 to 205 radio stations.

5. The Legal Problem: Fighting for Frequencies

> ”Sept. 11 2010: *Legislative Rollercoaster Continues*. The revised telecommunications law that would legalize community radio in Guatemala is closer than ever to being passed. On August 24th, the county’s president, Alvaro Colom, summoned radio operators and Cultural Survival to a meeting at the presidential palace […]. Unfortunately, the president failed to show at the meeting, and only the head of the judicial branch appeared. As expected, this caused an outrage among radio volunteers, many of whom had traveled great distances to make the meeting.” (Cultural Survival 2010b)

As with several other promises stated in the Peace Accords, the question of legacy for community radio stations in Guatemala has stood unanswered for more than 12 years. When I visited Guatemala from April to June 2010, the coordinators in the radio movement could announce that chances for getting a new law passed were now closer than ever. After several failed attempts since 1997, they were now stronger mobilized, a number of Congressmen had confirmed their support, and they had narrowed down the law proposal to become as “politically feasible as possible” (IN4). They had weekly meetings in Guatemala City, and were hoping to get their big chance in a Congress session in May, where the law proposal was pending to be presented. When May seemed to pass by, August was the next goal. “We’re all hoping for August now”, “It’s August – or never”, became the usual comments I got when asking about the progress.

However, the community radio movement receives little or no attention in the Guatemalan press. In late August 2010, *Prensa Libre* reported about “another road blockade”, where the *campesino* (farmer, peasant) organization CONIC (*Coordinadora Nacional Indigena y Campesina*)[23] had demonstrated against the government’s lack of efforts to pass a number of laws considered to benefit the indigenous and peasant population – among them, the community media law. They called for an ultimatum and a meeting with government representatives the following week. Unfortunately, none of the Congressmen showed up (Prensa Libre 2010). Only Cultural Survival[24] reported about another meeting

[23] CONIC is the dominant peasant organization in Guatemala. Their main goal is to make the government fulfill the nation’s land reform, laws and the promises in the Peace Accords (Treat 2002).

[24] *Cultural Survival* is a US-based non-governmental, indigenous rights organization. It has been involved in international indigenous issues for nearly 40 years, and is partnering with indigenous people all around the world. Their work is predicated on the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (IN4, Cultural Survival 2010a). They became involved in the Guatemalan radio movement in 2005.

between the President and the community radio movement. As the excerpt above informs, also this meeting failed.

Before looking more into reasons for this slow process, and how it affects the radio stations and the practitioners themselves, I will briefly summarize the main contents of the law proposal.

5.1 The law proposal: Community Media Law

In order to democratize the media landscape, there is a wide concensus among NGOs and various institutions that a reform of the Telecommunications Law is needed. In AMARC's report on the situation for community radio in Guatemala in 2005, it is clearly pointed out how the current licensing system is incompatible with a participatory democracy and the right to freedom of expression and information, which is guaranteed in the Constitution and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (AMARC 2005). In March 2010, DEMOS (*Central American Institue for Social Democracy*) presented to the Supreme Court the auction-based system in the Telecommunications Law as an unconstitutional action, regarding the procedure to clearly discriminate against poor communities in the country. The Guatemalan Frank La Rue Lewy, UN's Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression, publicly expressed his support (La Rue 2010a).

When the indigenous rights organization Cultural Survival got involved with the community radio movement, an important goal of the project was to solve the legal problem. The radio stations proclaiming themselves as *radios comunitarias* were already loosely organized. Four local radio practitioners that were active in the movement have later become Cultural Survival's local staff, part-time or full-time. Although Cultural Survival goal is to make the movement go on independently and sustainably through partnerships and funding with other local NGOs, its entrance to the field has evidently strengthened the network of community radio stations (IN4). My conversations with the radio staff further confirmed this. Apart from improving radio equipment and training, Cultural Survival, representatives from the seven local community radio associations and the radio volunteers have lobbied their way through to get the legal proposal drafted by members of the National Roundtable. In August 2009, the new initiative to legalize community radio was finally introduced in Congress (Freedom House 2010).

Specifically, the *Community Media Law* proposes the establishment of frequencies in the radio spectrum exclusively reserved for non-profit community media. Instead of auctions, the

right to use frequencies will be realized "by open and public discourse" (Iniciativa 4087, article 13, my transl.), based on the pros and cons for whether the various stations meet the requirements for a non-profit community media service or not. The social and public goal shall be "to aid the exercising of the right to information and freedom of expression [and] the promotion of social development", by ensuring community participation based on cultural diversity, diverse opinions and by strengthening cultural and social identity (Article 4). In order to ensure citizen involvement in the regulation and allocation of frequencies, the law proposal introduces the foundation of a *National Council of Community Media*, with representatives from the grass root level, educational institutions and the national level.

In theory, the Community Media Law without doubt corresponds to a more democratic media system, as well as the ILO Convention and the UN Declaration of Rights of Indigenous People and the Guatemalan Constitution. It is therefore natural to question what is still holding back a final approval. I will now look more into this dilemma.

A fight against authorities

"We've been fighting for this for 12 years. I'm sick and tired", said the President of the community radio association *Mujb'ab'l'yol* (IN5), when I asked him to explain more about the legislative process. The legal problem became an ongoing topic at radio station visits, seminars and meetings with the coordinators.

Authorities' fearing that a democratized media system will 'wake up the people from their sleep' was mentioned in several of my interviews as an explanation for the state's reluctance to pass the law. Bearing in mind the intertwined power relations between the government and powerful businessmen, 'authorities' in this case refers to both government members and commercial radio owners. Due to the historical background with the politics of assimilation, as explained in chapter 4, 'authorities' from an indigenous person's point of view can further be associated with those who stand for all the discrimination and who want to take away the Maya culture. A coordinator at one of the radio stations had the following explanation:

> "The problem here is that here – well, this is my personal opinion – the community radio stations, the true community radio stations, want to wake up their communities. And this… Here in Guatemala, there are 10 families who own everything – and these families don't want us to wake up, you know? Because of this, they have started these other stations, with great music, paying great singers to make songs, making movements for the youth, so that the young people engage in things that are in contrast with our tradition, our village." (LO5)

The *Prensa Libre* journalist and leader of AMECOS could further explain the logic of this shared impression:

> "… Because historically, only those who govern have had all the power. And 80 percent of the population has always been left out in the margins. The community radio stations, and the law that they are proposing, worries them. They are afraid that the people will open their eyes and again fight for their rights – *demand* their rights. And they think that this will become a problem for the government, because people will start asking questions, and demand that the government actually *fullfils* what they've promised. So yes, this is a great fear they got. And this is also the reason why they don't want community radio to exist. To maintain that people are always sleeping. To hold them back… For them, that's better." (IN3)

As mentioned earlier, community media represents a sharp contrast to private, profit-oriented media systems. Indigenous community radio stations are clearly not the most economically efficient media outlets (Browne 1996:6). Resistance in the economic sector, although some commercial radio stations actually have showed their support to community radio, is generally believed to be one of the main reasons for the slow process (IN2, IN4, Henderson 2008). The large corporate interest groups that are leading the chamber of radio diffusion are actively fighting against the law to get passed. Whatever the reasons for why or whether community radio is seen as a threat for Guatemalan authorities, my informants' comments above also demonstrate the conflict between civil society and powerful authorities. The conflict is not simply about media control and the need for a civic media sector in the media system, but about an overall struggle for indigenous people's rights and a stronger democratic society (Saeed 2009: 466-467).

From a political economical perspective, scholars have demonstrated how such commercial media systems can have a damaging effect on democratic processes and the public discourse (Howley 2010:3). Concentration of media ownership "undermines local cultural expression, privatizes the channels of public communication, and otherwise threatens the prospects for democratic self-governance" (ibid: 4). When economic power is intertwined with political power, a drastic change is certainly needed to break this circle.

Lack of political will

"These laws won't get through because they belong to the interests of the indigenous people, not the interests of the small group of rich people", the Maya politician Fortunato P. Mendoza concluded in our conversation, arguing that while it took fifteen days to pass a new

tax law, several laws for the indigenous population and the *campesinos* are still waiting to get passed (IN1, Prensa Libre 2010). This demonstrates what I have noted about the general lack of political will towards issues concerning the indigenous population, the alleged ancestral discrimination and racial ambivalence that still characterize much of the Guatemalan society. For the Maya population, who are used to an indifferent government and "a state that has seldom delivered for them" (Carey 2004:92), road blockades and demonstrations are everyday happenings and desperate tools to attract the government's attention.

A necessary goal for the community radio movement has been to get support from as many Congressmen as possible. As part of their plan for stronger political support, they have organized various regional conferences where Congressmen have been invited. In May 2010, one of the largest conferences so far was arranged in the department of Huehuetenango in Northwestern Guatemala. Eight regional Congressmen had been invited and accepted their invitation - but only one showed up. The coordinators, although disappointed, were not surprised. Statesmen's failing to attend meetings with civic organizations is nothing new[25].

Mobilization problems

The coordinators in the community radio movement further highlighted mobilization as another challenge. Social mobilization and popular organization on the grass root level has historically proved to be crucial in the breakup of regimes and strong authoritarian systems in various Latin American countries (Vilas 2003:4-5). In Guatemala, a growing grass root movement led to drastic transformations since the 1980s. However, a reinforced mobilization does not imply a unified movement; division and different views are also prominent among the indigenous population. According to Mendoza, the Maya population must become more unified, also on a regional and local level, in order to get though their proposals to the government and economic powers (IN1).

Also for the community radio practitioners – although they had never been as united as they had become in June 2010, with more radio stations represented than ever – the mobilization for meetings, demonstrations and seminars could still be difficult. Lack of resources, long travel distances, a few poorly structured radio associations, the slow information flow or ineffective meetings were partly to blame for this. Two coordinators also

[25] Presumably, in this case some Congressmen had suspected or feared that URNG, Guatemala's revolutionary party started by the guerilla movement during the war, stood behind the whole event (IN5).

pointed out internal divisions concerning what the criteria for a community radio should be. This is mainly because of a stronger religious mentality among some in the movement, who wish to have more airtime for religious programming than what the law proposal says (IN4, IN5)[26].

I will now look at how the radio practitioners themselves experience the legal problem.

5.2 Working 'illegally'

> "To work with something you feel criticized for is hard. It is hard because you do something that first of all benefits others more than yourself. And this is hard, because we feel weak. And the community radio stations have received a *lot* of criticism about being illegal. And we are illegal only because there is no article, or - there are articles that recognize us - but this hasn't helped the radio stations. There is one, the one about freedom of expression and thought, and this is exactly what community radio is doing." (LO8)

The feeling of not being heard, of not being acknowledged on a national level for what they do, and the fact that they are working 'illegally', was clearly a burden for the radio practitioners I interviewed. The *locutores*[27] were well informed about what the law proposal – referred to as "*La iniciativa 4087*" – contains, and that the right to freedom of thought and expression, as well as cultural and ethnic diversity, is guaranteed in the Guatemalan Constitution. Some also pointed at their posters of The UN Declaration, which Cultural Survival had distributed to several radio stations. "Listen. We call it a fight. But really, it shouldn't be. It's our right! It is written!" (IN1) one informant said, in his effort to describe the unfair and absurd situation they are in.

The continuing violent and insecure situation that Guatemalan media workers experience has maintained a chilling effect on the media industry (Freedom House 2010). Violence and threats against journalists in Central America are often related to organized crime, the drug traffic and corruption. Despite this atmosphere, the locutores did not seem directly afraid. They felt confident that the service they are providing is useful also for the town council, the health committee and other local institutions. They are only interested in community-related issues: "We are not here to compete with the commercial stations. […]

[26] Many community radio stations are in reality more religious, which the law proposal clearly opposes. During a meeting with radio staff from 22 radio stations, they agreed to allow religious programming in 10 to 20 percent of total air time. There are still internal divisions concerning the question of religion (IN4, IN5).

And I think they [the Ministerio Publico] can see that we are working to improve our community. Culture and tradition is our goal, and it's not for sale!" (LO5). Nevertheless, the locutores know that they are accused for 'stealing' frequencies in the radio spectrum and any well-respected authority can have their radio stations shut down, although it is primarily the more commercial or religious pirate stations that have experienced most of the last years' police raids and fines. One of the community radio stations I visited had been threatened in the past, and used to have a secret location. Today, they have consciously avoided putting any sign outside their small studio:

> "They took all our equipment. Yep, they did. And the *Ministerio Publico* has persecuted us, as if we were criminals. And we've been accused for being criminals who want to steal the radio spectrum, and that we enjoy working illegally. So there have been lots of *campañas negras*[28] towards the community radio stations." (LO12)

Comments about 'them', that 'they don't like what we are doing', was a general attitude I met. The generally negative attitude towards authorities might also derive from their experience with discrimination, widespread corruption and the conditions for journalists. However, instead of a direct threat, the legal problem primarily seemed to be one of many disturbing barriers that would not let them develop further. When asking how things would be if the law is finally approved, each and all of the locutores replied that they will – and cannot – ever give up: "It is the community's right" (LO8). This mentality and attitude might derive from a general mentality among the Maya population, together with the internationally supported Maya movement and their increased motivation for recognition.

Other barriers

Working under such conditions further hinders the radio movement in improving programming and content. A lot of the few resources they have are used for the mobilization rather than to improve the radio stations:

> "If it got legalized, we could go directly to the meetings and we did no longer need to discuss how to legalize the radio, more other things.[…]So we travel a lot to fight for [*la initiativa 4087*]. Still, at least the people here are supporting us. They contribute with 5 quetzales each so that we can go. And then we can go to represent our radio station. If it wasn't for the people, we would have to stay here." (LO2)

Also for the Cultural Survival staff, the lobbying for the law proposal, with meeting after

[28] A *campaña negra* = Spanish term for a *smear campaign,* an expression for reputation-damaging activities

meeting, has taken up a lot more work than what they had hoped for:

> "Having to keep pushing on that front really detracts from improving the training, improving the content, improving the equipment – you know, all sorts of other things, that the same energy could go into, that are suffering because so much energy is focused on getting the law changed." (IN4)

Another key issue mentioned was how the legal problem influenced the question of funding. Various non-governmental and intergovernmental agencies have showed interest in supporting the community radio stations in different ways, especially since they target a population that humanitarian organizations aim to reach. As long as the radio stations are not completely legal, it remains difficult or risky for them to get involved. A law approval could open up for more resources and incomes, which obviously could strengthen the stations in several ways. The consequences for funding problems and lack of resources will be further discussed in chapter 8.

5.3 Working together

The question of legacy for Guatemalan community radio demonstrates a fundamental barrier that keeps preventing an indigenous population from access to media, information and free expression in their own society. The commercial and political dilemma and the radio practitioners' experiences with this reality are therefore important to have in mind when discussing other issues concerning Guatemalan community radio.

Lastly, I would like to mention what my conversations with the locutores and my visits to radio stations indicated: the fight for a space in the radio spectrum gives them, at least those actively involved in the movement, a shared goal and a strengthened sense of community. By joining a regional community radio association, which again is connected to the national radio movement, the radio stations have a place to get information, more resources and radio training, and they feel more secure in a 'lawless' landscape. Being part of a national movement seemed to make them feel proud of what they do, and that their work is valuable and useful. In line with traditional Maya mentality, they are working collectively for a common good. And along with other increasing mobilization efforts and initiatives within the Maya population, as well as with other indigenous movements worldwide, such efforts generally seek to develop more cohesiveness and unity among the indigenous population, a

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aimed at targeting a special group or individuals.

unity “that had vanished in the wake of colonization” (Browne 1996:67). The community radio movement’s motivation to continue their fight for a community media law represents not only a fight for a more democratic media culture, but a more democratic society as a whole. As scholars indicate, community media projects all over the world have demonstrated such collective efforts for “democratization *through* the media” (Howley 2010:279).

However, the coordinators also acknowledged that when the law finally is reality, then the real job begins. Before uncovering some of these challenges, the following chapter will look more into the distinct strengths that the radio stations have developed, and how they through their existence can contribute to a more just and equitable society based on their own premises.

6. Revitalizing Maya Culture

> Whenever I'm walking through the narrow streets of Todos Santos, the echo of Radio Xob'il Yol follows me. In nearly every house, in every little tienda (shop), I hear the sound of marimba music. Or the radio voice speaking in Mam. When I'm having breakfast or dinner with my host family, the radio sound follows.[…] It strikes me how the noisy Spanish-speaking commercial radio sound is just gone. (Field notes, 02.06.10)

Todos Santos Cuchumatán, an isolated municipality in the highlands of Northwestern Guatemala, is well known for its strong and colorful Maya culture, and is one of the few places in Guatemala where the men still wear their distinct traditional dress – also the younger teenage boys. Approximately 95 percent of the 27.000 inhabitants speak *Mam* and only 45 percent of the Mam speakers are bilingual (Portalewska 2004). The majority are *campesinos* working in the fields, and the education level has historically been low[29]. The cultural and social contrast with more urban areas is inevitable and might be one of the reasons why the local community radio station has become such an integrated part of the village life. Moreover, it ties together the many small communities located in the mountains around the main town.

Todos Santos is only one example of how, in a globalized world of a high-tech commercialized media landscape, local radio stations can stand out as a remarkable contrast. At first sight this medium also seems to solve several central issues for poorer, marginalized communities. Radio is the cheapest medium in terms of equipment, production and reception, easily reaching remote areas, illiterate people and communities "at the very end of the development road" (Pavarala & Malik 2007:16).

As noted in chapter 2, the characteristics of community radio vary distinctively and you must look at the processes of production in order to understand their value and purpose. For the community radio movement in Guatemala, the right to information and cultural expression has been key arguments for their existence. *Radios comunitarias,* as nonpartisan and nonsectarian communication media for indigenous people, is defined by similar criteria as suggested by AMARC and UNESCO (see chapter 2). Due to the hundreds of local radio

[29] "Historically, most have had limited or no access to secondary education, let alone media technology. Seventy percent of all children attend first grade, but the financial and social conditions only allow 10 percent to finish the sixth grade and even fewer to go on to secondary education. The main institutions of formal education with technological content are found only in the main cities and departmental centers" (Portalewska 2010).

stations proclaiming themselves as community radio, the growing radio movement has later found it necessary to outline the basic national requirements that are needed in order to serve as a community radio[30]. In addition to administrative requirements, community radio should be educative, informative and cultural. It should offer programming in one of the indigenous languages and have a name that reflects their cultural identity (see Appendix B).

I will now look at how the radio stations work as tools for defending and revitalizing the Maya identity through cultural expressions.

Culture and music

"We always play traditional marimba music during lunch hour, because then every family is having lunch and it's a perfect time for marimba. So people have adapted this habit", explained the 17-year old locutor Brenda G. Peneleu (LO9), to illustrate how they have organized their program schedule at *Radio Sembrador*[31]. The marimba instrument and its distinct sound has characterized the Guatemalan community life for hundreds of years, but clearly breaks with the mainstream image of commercial radio stations. At the community radio stations the use of marimba marks an essential part of the indigenous people's identity. The music represents something that is only theirs: "Whenever I hear the sound of marimba, it touches something deep, deep down in my heart. That's how important it is for us" (IN1).

Ever since the colonial period, campaigns for 'castellanización' – "to make Spanish the normal language of communication for indigenous people" (Castells-Talens et al.:527) – and the so-called politics of assimilation have pushed, and some places wiped away, indigenous culture to the periphery. One important goal for the community radio movement, based on the overall goals of the Maya movement and promises in the Peace Accords, is to use radio as a promoter and supporter of the Maya culture. Each radio station is advised to devote a certain percentage of their airtime to cultural programming. Programs such as *Historico Cultural, Programa Cultural,* or *Calendario Maya* are essential parts of the weekly daily schedule. *Radio Ixchel* in Sumpango and *Radio Sembrador* in San Pedro La Laguna further explained how the locutores use their cell phones to transmit local cultural events. This

[30] During a series of meetings in May 2010, 35 representatives from 17 different radio stations nation-wide narrowed down the most important characteristics into 11 points that – if the law proposal gets through – each radio station must fulfill in order to be granted a frequency (see Appendix B). In addition, they have outlined the basic requirements for content, in order to avoid too much religious programming and ensure that a non-commercial, participative, cultural and educational standard (IN4).

[31] *Sembrador* = Spanish term for a *planter*, *a sower of seeds.*

service is also a response to the lack of cultural news in the commercial radio stations: "If you listen to the news there, they only have *notas amarillas* – only news about deaths, murders and accidents. As an opposite, if there is a cultural event around here, we always try to transmit it" (LO12).

Culture and language

> "… Earlier, all programming was Spanish, Spanish, Spanish. But now we can speak our own language, so that the elders – everyone – understands exactly the message we are transmitting. So we speak two languages, to have a mix. If we for instance have announcements in Spanish, we do them in tzju'l afterwards, so that everyone understands." (LO9)

In this connection, language is essential for the rich Maya culture. The locutores repeatedly mentioned the important role of radio in revitalizing their local indigenous language. To them, this represents much more than a political tool or an additional service disregarded by commercial media. An indigenous language carries important aspects of values, beliefs and ideology and is often linked to land or territory. Language is therefore "an essential component of one's collective and individual identity and therefore provides a sense of belonging and community" (UN 2009). Many studies on ethnic minority media demonstrate the important contribution for the survival of minority languages (Riggins 1992:283, Browne 1996:7). For indigenous people in Latin America, community radio can serve as a channel for revival not only of traditions and cultural practices, but also of their languages that have been marginalized for centuries.

In Guatemala, with 22 recognized languages, it was not until the 1980s that studies of Maya languages and texts were brought up to the surface and received more credit. But the idea of social change via broadcasting with Maya-language radio programs actually began briefly in the mid-1940s and early 1950s, during a short, flourishing period of democracy and a "cultural and political awakening" (Rockwell 2001:428). However, this era was quickly curtailed by another dictatorship from 1954. Later efforts with Maya-language broadcasting have occurred, but as demonstrated in chapter 4, the institutional hierarchy in the media landscape easily squeezes out such alternative initiatives. So far, *Radio Nuevo Mundo*, one of the most popular nation-wide radio outlets, is the only commercial radio station offering programming in *K'icheé,* the most used Maya language today (Ekern 2005:v). The show's host has received anonymous racist threats on several occasions ever since he started voluntarily in 1991, "from people who opposed any sort of indigenous voice on the

airwaves" (Rockwell & Janus 2003:92). During the civil war he was also kidnapped. However, the 15-minute daily slot at 4 AM – functioning as "the call of the *campesino"* (ibid: 91) – quickly achieved great popularity among farm laborers, and the owners let the show go on.

Among the community radio stations I visited, *Radio Xob'il Yol* in Todos Santos especially focused on the role they play by providing information and news in Mam. Several people in their municipality do not speak Spanish and have few prerequisites to know what is going on in their own country. In order to improve this service, the coordinator saw the need to get younger people involved, especially because they have better Spanish and computer skills. Three young female students who started in January 2010 are now regularly informing about national and international news in Mam, which has been especially appreciated by the illiterate and non-Spanish speakers:

> "In the afternoon we look for news on the Internet, in Prensa Libre, and inform the people in Mam. We give the 'lecture' in Spanish, and then summarize in Mam. We don't have time to translate everything. This is when women have called us and said 'ah, how great that you understand what is happening, because we've been listening, but don't understand a thing.'" (LO3)

In the more Spanish influenced villages, bringing Maya languages into the airwaves is perceived as a tool for *rescuing* the language:

> "Cajola has forgotten lots of things, like language, clothing, customs, it is already changing. The people no longer wants to speak in Mam. To start with me – I speak it and read it, but I don't write it. The majority doesn't know how to write it." (LO6)

> "Because, yes, we can speak it, but we have lost a lot, a lot of what… how to pronounce the words. So because of this, we want to promote the language through various programs we have. And this has strengthened the language. As a principle, people didn't accept this. But gradually, they started to adapt it." (LO10)

As Castells-Talens et al. (2009) argues, bringing indigenous languages into the radio waves legitimizes the language for the public sphere, which in that way breaks "the hegemonic structure of languages" (Castells-Talens et al 2009:525). And young people, who are often most likely to adapt to the majority language of the country, can find role models and encouragement to preserve their native language (Riggins 1992:283). In Cultural Survival's annual report from 2006, one radio volunteer goes as far as concluding that his local radio station has brought their language *Pocomam* back into offices, to the streets and to the children: "Without community radio, we might have lost our native tongue" (Cultural

Survival 2006:5).

It is beyond this study to conclude that the community radio stations actually have strengthened the Maya languages. But with 22 different languages, in a society permeated by Spanish, it requires much effort to protect an indigenous language. By filling the gap ignored by commercial media, the community radio stations clearly give these languages a new life outside the private sphere.

'We shouldn't forget what is ours'

The locutores see themselves as important promoters and preservers of their indigenous culture and identity. The marimba music is the "music we have lost or music we have forgotten" (IN3), and thus even more essential to utilize. The influence of the Ladino culture varied in the villages I visited. For *Radio Sembrador* in San Pedro La Laguna another influencing factor the village sees is the increasing tourism in one part of the town, where the Western 'backpacker' culture is dominating. Some expressed a concern about these influences; that people seem to forget about their own history and turn to 'modern things':

> "Part of the mission with the radio is to say to the people that we shouldn't forget what is ours. We hope that some day we can establish a centre that can teach about our culture, history, traditions, celebrations – that will talk about what is ours. 'How was it in the past?' When the Spanish came…[…] In this way, Cajola has changed a lot. People no longer want to play marimba, especially not the young people." (LO6)

> "Because some people refrain from valuing the culture we got. What we want is that it is valued, and to help those who don't, and remind people about where exactly we come from". (LO3)

> "I have my show 'Historical Cultural', and lots of people have come to me, also from the surrounding villages, saying 'Ah, thank you so much for having this show, because I didn't know anything of this! It was the first time I heard about it!' So many people are surprised. And why? Because they have forgotten, the generation today… and the teenagers… It is necessary that they know. It is part of the value of being human." (IN1)

The arguments for cultural programming coincides with the goal of the *Agreement on Identity and Rights for Indigenous People*, which highlights the importance of facilitating for better integration of Maya culture and language, where the government "promises to promote a multicultural, multilingual and multiethnic national identity" (Solstad 2001:91, my transl.). To fulfill this, people must be able to experience this plurality in real life – both in social and political institutions and the media. Drawing on this perspective, Mendoza (IN1) states that by being "the transmitters of our cultural values", the community radio stations are part of

Guatemala's development. Browne (1996) also talks about the cultural value of indigenous media and how it transcends any *economical* value of the media. Culture is "fundamental to the continued enrichment of the larger society because it is a continual reminder of alternatives" (Browne 1996:7). Indigenous media all over the world have shown how both traditional and new media can be used to preserve and revitalize culture, language and traditions, and in this way challenge "misleading mainstream and official state narratives" (Wilson & Stewart 2008).

However, indigenous media cannot be fully responsible for this. As long as the dominant media and the dominant public sphere ignores the Maya world, the valuing and understanding of culture and language is restricted to the indigenous population only, and not the Ladinos – who clearly lack most knowledge of their fellow citizens' lifestyle and culture (Solstad 2001:103). At this point of my analysis, I will argue that the community radio stations as far as they can are utilizing their potentials to promote renewed appreciation of Maya history and culture *within* the communities, and that a broader recognition and appreciation is dependent on other surrounding social and political factors.

7. Connecting and informing the community

Another central characteristic of the community radio stations I visited was their function as communicators, by providing a basic public service for their local communities and by promoting the right to communicate and opening up for access to information. These characteristics were also the initial driving forces for several of the radio stations founded after the civil war: to provide informative programming in indigenous languages that would spread information about the contents of the Peace Accords. The radio association *Mujb'ab'l yol* – which means 'meeting place of expressions' in Mam – was primarily founded because they saw the need to implement such radio projects. The government had promised to distribute this information in different languages to all indigenous people, which also the ILO Convention 169 highlights[32]. "But although there were lots of commercial stations, television and press, no campaign was set up by the government to spread the word" (LO1). In this chapter I will demonstrate the communicative value of Guatemalan community radio stations. In addition to promoting and revitalizing Maya cultural expressions, the radio stations are also filling other essential gaps in the dominating media discourse.

A central communication channel

First of all, the radio stations have become central junctions for *anuncios* (announcements) – the most traditional and basic functions of a communication medium. These slots offer practical information about meetings, greetings to family and friends, people who have passed away, things gone missing, or people who have become ill. Radio is a great communicator for rural villages where houses are often spread and disconnected. In Todos Santos, with several smaller communities in the valleys surrounding the main town, it might take months between the more rural *campesinos'* (farmers) visits to the center. According to founder and coordinator Rosendo P. Ramirez, the whole municipality has become smaller and more united because of the radio station: "They don't know what's going on here in town, you know. In the past, we thought the municipality Todos Santos was huge. Especially these people felt that. But now, we all look at the village as very tiny [ha-ha]" (LO5).

[32] Article 30 states: "1. Governments shall adopt measures appropriate to the traditions and cultures of the peoples concerned, to make known to them their rights and duties, especially in regard to labour, economic opportunities, education and health matters, social welfare and their rights deriving from this Convention. 2. If necessary, this shall be done by means of written translations and through the use of mass communications in

All the radio stations I visited have developed a social service for people who have lost family members or who need help from their communities. The radio station then becomes the meeting point where the locals come with a few *quetzales* (Guatemala's money currency), some rice, corn or tortillas. It is common practice in Guatemalan community life to mobilize and help collectively when someone is in a special need:

> "Sometimes we collect money to those who need it the most, those who in reality don't have anything. And people, they come! If only with a little bit of rice, and so on. They listen on the radio, and come. The village helps out this way." (LO6)

> "In San Juan there are some religious stations, but they don't offer this service. So people from San Juan come here. We got many listeners from other villages. As a result, we have gained trust and awareness of the importance of this service." (LO1)

The increased use of cell phones[33] has not reduced this function – on the contrary. It is obviously cheaper to send a collective message through the radio. And the telephone line at the radio stations is open for anyone to call in and immediately be on air – with no censure[34]. This is a sharp contrast to commercial radio stations, where music or commercials take up most of the space.

During floods, storms or volcano eruptions the radio stations are essential for providing their villages with updates on the situation. People call the radio station about damaged or closed roads, and the locutores either let them talk live or report the information. I saw clear examples on this during my fieldwork when the storm *Agatha* came (in May 2010), which became the deadliest tropical cyclone in Central America since 1997. Villages around lake Atitlan were gravely hit, and people lost family members and their homes. *Radio Sembrador* extended their opening hours and partly re-scheduled their programming the following days. Todos Santos belonged to the least affected area, but due to the heavy rain a community member had gone missing. While community members were out looking for him, the radio station held open all day, updating with information from the people who were out searching. Both radio stations also mobilized their communities to help out support any affected

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the languages of these peoples." (ILO 1989)

[33] The use of cell phones increased from 500,000 cell phones in 1995 to 13.3 million in 2007, which exceeded the number of people. Coverage is now reaching 99 percent of the mountainous country. In contrast, 7.7 percent have access to high-speed Internet. Also rural communities are likely to have more than one cell phone each (Andrade 2010b).

[34] I personally realized this when I phoned the staff at Radio Sembrador to confirm my meeting with one of the locutores later. "Hello Kristina, just so you know - you're on air right now. Send a greeting to the audience!"

families.

The information channel: A 'human rights reminder'

The radio stations further provide essential information services for their citizens. In recent years the radio movement has increased their focus on the educational part of this service in order to provide information, or *consejos* (advice, recommendations), about health, environment, indigenous peoples' rights, political participation and other educational topics (IN4, IN6). Cultural Survival has partnered with ten NGOs to produce and distribute radio programs about health, environmental protection, and organic agriculture (Cultural Survival 2010a). I will look more into these productions in the next chapter. In addition, local authorities have increasingly implemented this service as part of their work. I saw different examples on this, for instance while I was visiting *Radio Mujb'ab'l yol*[35] and listened to three women from the local health centre and their weekly information slot, this time about women and pregnancy.

NGOs, human rights or environmental organizations are becoming more aware of the value community radio stations have by reaching out to an isolated population. The effort to increase political participation during electoral processes is one example. Guatemala struggles with high abstention rates among the indigenous people. Due to the isolated living conditions with long travel distances, high illiteracy rates, together with deceptive propaganda during election campaigns and a general lack of faith in such elections, the country has "one of the highest abstention rates in Latin America" (Carey 2004:76). In an effort to improve this, the community radio movement signed a contract with a the *Rigoberta Menchu Foundation* and a local UN organization, where by broadcasting information about how to vote in the next election these organizations give a financial contribution to the radio stations (IN4). Another example is the increased collaboration with environmental organizations. Many villages have had huge problems with waste and garbage floating around in the streets, and the radio stations are regularly informing about the importance of preserving nature. Three of the locutores even used this as their proof when I asked them how their village had changed since the community radio entered: "Oh, yes, it has changed. Because unfortunately, before we started talking about the environment, everybody just threw everything in the lake [Atitlan]. But now – rarely. They have understood" (LO8).

[35] *Radio Mujb'ab'l yol* was the first community radio project started by the radio association *Mujb'ab'l yol,* in 1997. It now operates only as one of the 24 members of the association.

Given the low literacy rates and low education level in rural areas[36], the purpose of providing this information carries a strong developmental perspective. Also the locutores believe they are working for the development of their village – "so that it can advance a little bit", as one of the female locutores said (LO2). And as most people are more accustomed to listening to music when switching on their radio, another locutor explains how he uses marimba music as a 'teaser' to keep the listeners' attention: "I inform about human rights, the Convention 169, what our constitution says… and then I put on some pure Guatemalan marimba in-between" (LO7).

Journalist Saenz believes that the information service the community radio stations are offering should make the government eventually see how this effectively can benefit the whole country:

> "With the radio, they [the Maya population] are becoming more involved in what is going on in our country. And it serves the government as well, because some radio stations are also passing on messages from the government, concerning public health, school information, environmental topics, and so on." (IN3)

A 'school'

The information service shows how community radio potentially can have an educative role that further can benefit the education system. Positioning education within community radio or other media technologies is well known to be effective teaching methods (Sobers 2010). Also Latin American scholars have highlighted the educative potential of this kind of communication (Piña & Arribas 2001 acc. to Henderson 2008:96). From this perspective, Guatemalan community radio can operate as a supplement to the inadequate formal education system[37]. In her study of the 1996 Telecommunications Law and its implications for community radio, Henderson highlights how both listeners and locutores share the view of community radio as an educative tool: "the tendency to see community radio as a school,

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[36] The illiteracy rate among indigenous people and in rural areas is significantly higher than the non-indigenous and urban population, especially among women. The illiteracy rate among younger women is decreasing. However, the last UNDP report on Guatemala revealed that 32 percent of indigenous women between ages 15 to 24 in rural areas are illiterate, compared to the national average of 15 % among indigenous women and 8.6 % of young indigenous men. The illiteracy rate in urban areas was 5.5 %, compared to 18.8 % in rural areas (UNDP 2008).

[37] The lack of adequate educational opportunities is a reality for indigenous groups all over the world, where formal school systems fail to meet the needs of these people (UN 2009). The Guatemalan education system has received harshly critique for being inadequate and to not address the multilingual and multicultural needs of the country, recently pointed out by UNESCO's *Education For All* monitoring report (UNESCO 2010b).

for practitioners as well as members of the listening audience, was consistent across all the communities" (Henderson 2008:97). Also my own informants expressed a great satisfaction about everything they had learned about topic such as environment and health, and how they could benefit the people by passing on this knowledge.

In sum: Filling gaps – while leaving others open?

By opening up for cultural expressions, providing information, and by giving space for voices that are left out in the national media, the community radio stations are filling essential gaps in the dominating media discourse and the Guatemalan society. As other studies on community media show, they might even "represent the only link between the local population and the wider world" (Howley 2010:73) and offer a social service "that neither the state nor the market offer to local communities" (ibid). One locutor, when asked what he thinks his village Cajola would be like if they didn't have the radio station, goes as far as saying that the whole village would be dead:

> "I think it would be dead! Yes, I think so! Because – well, listen. Maybe 90 percent of the people have a radio. And maybe 95 percent, I think. It's there on the table; some people bring it to work, for the music and to know the hour. So they are listening to what is happening, they are listening to what's going on in the village. […] So through one communication medium the whole village is interacting. Not only personally, but the messages come through in every house. This is keeping us alive, and if the radio was dead – I don't know what would happen." (LO6)

Still, for community radio to work as a tool for deliberative public spheres, it should be more than a communication platform and a cultural promoter. Additionally, in relation to educational community media practices, Sobers notes that researchers often put such activities together with the ideals of media democracy and active participants, without acknowledging "the differences in motivations and aims" (Sobers 2010:188). Again, a closer look at the processes of a production and the level of actual participation is necessary. Furthermore, despite all the emphasis on the strengths of their community radio stations, the locutores and the coordinators also recognize a number of limits that are refraining them from utilizing their own media to its fullest and filling more gaps – which I will discuss in the following chapter.

8. Limitations: The Vicious Circle of Community Radio

During a radio workshop with 40 indigenous radio volunteers from different departments of Guatemala[38], one of the lecturers asks the participants: "Who of you know how to conduct an interview?" Three of the volunteers raise their hands. They carry on with the *guión radiofónico*, a formative guide on how to do a radio program, followed by practical exercises such as how to speak on air and how to start an interview.

This example can give us an idea of the knowledge and education level among radio practitioners at Guatemalan radio stations. Some lack any education, some have had primary or elementary school, while others – primarily the younger volunteers – have gone to high school and are maybe aiming for an entrance to university or college in the future. Overall, they all have other obligations and very few had any knowledge about radio programming or community media before becoming involved in their local radio station. This is not uncommon for alternative media workers; it is rather one of the main ideas with community media. Whoever they are – farmers, fishermen, elders, or children – the key point is to make the channels of communication open to nonprofessional media makers (Pavarala & Malik 2007:17, Howley 2010:16).

In the two previous chapters I looked at the cultural, communicative and informative value of Guatemalan community radio. However, in order to make the best out of participative community media, other aspects needs consideration. How are they trained – and is this necessary? What other types of content are they producing? Are their working methods independent or influenced by external factors? Before discussing the level of participation at the radio stations, I find it necessary to highlight what my interviewees always mentioned as their key challenge for moving further: lack of economic resources, followed by lack of equipment, experience and knowledge about the field. I will look at whether socio-cultural factors might affect this process and how the radio movement deals with their further goals for community radio.

[38] The radio workshop 'Jovenes que aprenden de jovenes' was divided in four modules, held by fourth-year students in Communication and Development Studies at Universidad Rafael Landívar, Quetzaltenango. The workshop was a collaboration with the radio association Mujb'ab'l yol. I attended the last module named 'the operation and management of a radio station' (May 8, 2010).

8.1 Lack of resources

> "Because here, when we talk about equipment...We need maintenance, right? One thing is equipment, another thing is the maintenance. For example, if we have to repair this, repair that, and get a new microphone… It's with the equipment that we can move forward, and make reportages. Because sometimes we need to communicate with each other, or go and collect news, so that the people hear about it. Like, if there is an accident, a car crash where there might be some one affected – that's interesting to inform about to the people. We would like to do more, but because of the equipment we can't." (LO7)

"We need more resources" was the implicit answer I got when talking with the locutores about the challenges for their radio station. I have noted earlier that the legal problem is a central barrier, for security reasons and because more NGOs are expected to give contributions once this is solved. More advanced equipment – better bandwidth coverage and Internet access – would clearly break further barriers for better programming. Murillo (2010) defines this common problem for community media as a 'vicious circle': "It starts with a lack of financial, then technical resources, meaning less people will get involved, making it more difficult to get people trained and eventually adjust from their older routines of working in the countryside into the newer world of working in the community media" (Murillo 2010:247). The description of this vicious circle sums up a lot of the Guatemalan community radio practitioners' view; that more financial resources would open up for more opportunities.

Radio is considered "an affordable medium in terms of production, management, as well as for reception" (Pavarala & Malik 2007: 16). However, the radio antennas at Guatemalan community radio stations often have restricted or unstable coverage, which makes reception problematic at times: "For example, there is a small village only three kilometers from here, and we don't get that far" (LO12). Apart from the computers donated by Cultural Survival, they only possess basic recording equipment and one or two microphones, and the radio staff is not able to produce more advanced content by for instance leaving their studio, doing interviews on the street or by taking use of more advanced program editing. However, to compensate for this they take use of their cell phones when transmitting events in the community, which makes them not totally incapable of proving "an *electronic* manifestation of the *actual* public sphere" (Murillo 2010:247). Although this service seems to be appreciated by listeners, the signal through a cell phone is bad. And with tiny one-room studios they further have limited opportunities to invite to a 'on air conversation' or other

formats involving more people simultaneously (IN3). Such limitations demonstrate that a deliberate, dynamic community radio would imply more than simply a microphone and a sender in order to generate more of its potentials.

Local funding

By being a non-profit, voluntary-based service, the community radio stations are deliberatively rejecting any kind of commercial sponsors, except announcements from local enterprises in the village. They are thus very dependent on the voluntary contributions from their community, which is a prerequisite for a community radio as it aims to be organized and run collectively. This mentality draws suits well the collective meaning of community – or *komon* – in traditional Maya culture, characterized by the importance of sharing, collaborating and working for a common good instead of individual interests (Covic 2005, Ekern 2005).

However, although people may seem willing to donate a few quetzales now and then, poverty and restricted economic resources makes it an unreliable source of income. At one radio station, the coordinator further expressed a deep concern about the lack of interest among community members, and how this affected their economy:

> "Because sometimes people give more when they will win something themselves. But if they don't win, they won't give. So this is another problem we've met. This indicates that we need more awareness among the people about the importance of participating in this kind of service. Not so they will pay us, but so that we can work collectively. That is a big challenge." (LO1)

At other radio stations, the locutores felt that they had passed the period when people were suspicious about the service. People have gradually started to value the collective purpose of this new format. In addition to the increasing positive feedback, community members have also donated travel expenses so that the locutores can attend radio seminars, or stopped by with lunch to the locutores – so that the radio can go on" (LO2).

Staffing concerns

Despite the increased interest, it can be harder to get more people directly involved. The volunteers' involvement at the radio station is already limited due to other occupations or jobs. The men are often campesinos, and are usually having early radio shifts in the morning or late afternoon in-between their work out *en el campo* (in the fields). For women, the central role they play in the domestic sphere, or other 'traditional' Maya customs, might

prevent their opportunity or invitation to volunteer[39]. An empty radio studio was a common sight wherever I went, with no sign of life except the marimba music on repeat.

The question of salary is therefore another dilemma. Although those involved so far have become so because of their personal enthusiasm, or through requests from the radio stations, and are not interested in earning money, they did acknowledge the difficulties with being a volunteer and that some economic contribution would help both them and attract more people: "Maybe they would like to work, but with what can we pay them?", one locutor said (LO2), while another emphasized that while she was there to learn more, other people "only want to work if someone pays them. It's always like that" (LO10). The eldest locutor regularly got comments at home about all the energy he uses at *Radio Sembrador*: "In my house, I always hear: 'Ah, are you going to the radio again? How much are they paying you?'" (LO7). The coordinator at *Radio Ixchel* also stated that if he could choose, he would have given a salary to all the volunteers (LO12).

Getting more people involved is not necessarily a new problem for community media initiatives and other non-profit services. When studying three indigenous radio stations in Colombia, Murillo further found that the lack of better equipment affected the enthusiasm among younger newcomers (Murillo 2010:247). Also for the Guatemalan case this was seen as a barrier for some: "There are many of the younger people who would like to do more with the radio. They've got many ideas, but we lack money", the coordinator at *Radio Ixchel* said (LO12), further demonstrating the 'vicious circle' of community radio.

According to Murillo, "the public sphere role of the stations can also be measured by the overall level of community participation within them" (ibid). When administrative and programming staff might consist of 5 to 10 people, what does this say about the radio station's role in the community? A further dilemma here is the *ideal* of community radio as a community service where the traditional distinction between broadcasters and listeners is challenged, "to put community members in charge of their own affairs" (Pavarala & Malik 2007:18). From this dynamic point of view, the distinction between user and participant is less clear, which can be "a critical step toward democratizing communication" (Howley 2010:18).

The question is whether this ideal is merely a utopian, romanticized idea of community radio that cannot be transferred to local conditions, like in a Maya community. One must

[39] I will return to the question of gender roles and women's participation in chapter 9.

then look at how the community radio is encouraging participation otherwise – which I will discuss in chapter 9.

8.2 Lack of knowledge and experience

> "If we could get more training for the locutores… opportunities to study journalism and so on… it would have been better. This would also change our work, how to use it in the radio and so on. None of us who are working in the radio have been able to study journalism. […] No empiric. All we have learned we have learned by practice, not in a school." (LO1)

Another aspect challenging amateur journalistic forms and media practices is the implications of the limited experience among the radio volunteers (Navarro 2009, Murillo 2010). When studying a local radio station near Lima in Peru, Navarro found that the lack of resources, skills and "the know-how to improve their formats and strategies" (Navarro 2010:627) limited the radio station to become fully deliberative. The radio staff was very enthusiastic and produced news broadcasts and discussions, but they were still inexperienced and lacked a clear communication strategy. Navarro demonstrates how lack of knowledge and experience prevented the radio station's potential to transform the public sphere "as a more critical and democratic one" (ibid:621). What does this indicate for the idea of community media as a social process open for all community members, where amateur media producers should be able to "write and report from their position as citizens" (Atton 2009:265)?

The Guatemalan locutores I interviewed had varying backgrounds and different levels of experience. Only one of them could not read, although it generally seemed as a prerequisite or advantage to have reading skills in order to benefit the rest of the community as best as possible. They had all attended various radio seminars to learn about radio recording, programming, 'how to be a good locutor', interview techniques or Internet use. Some of them emphasized other workshops they had attended that were not directly related to community radio practice, but that taught about human rights issues, health, or environment: "because it is important to know what to inform about" (LO9).

The coordinators still acknowledged the need for more training at the radio stations, both technical and journalistic training: "What we need help with is how to work a bit more professionally, more technical… and how to make the radio stations more attractive as well, to the listeners" (IN6). The workshops they offer are voluntary, but the movement is

considering making it mandatory for all who aims at labeling themselves as a community radio. The strategies and teaching methods for the workshops are also considered as crucial to reflect upon: "Like, how should we make people understand why community radio is important? For instance, maybe we should avoid saying that 'it is important for the development', as many don't understand exactly what this implies" (IN4/IN6[40]).

The content production team

Arranging workshops demands resources – yet another example on Murillo's description of the 'vicious circle'. In an effort to both improve the content and to compensate for the lack of resources and experiences with radio production, as well as to facilitate for a dynamic teaching process, Cultural Survival, together with representatives in the community radio movement, has developed a content production team with two coordinators and five to six locutores from different radio stations. This group, changing members from time to time in order to get more volunteers involved, is then partly registered as Cultural Survival staff and produces informative programs from different departments of Guatemala. During 2009, they created 286 radio slots focusing on indigenous rights, environmental protection, sustainable agriculture, fair trade, health, and political participation. In 2010, they continued with programs about topics such as mining and coffee production. 60 volunteers participated in a series of workshops to produce a *radionovela*[41], an informative, social issues-related 'soap opera' for radio (Cultural Survival 2010a).

As mentioned in the previous chapter, these programs have a particular educational purpose. The radionovela format is believed to be especially intriguing for listeners, and seems to have been well received in many of the villages (IN6, LO9). The programs are made available online or distributed on CDs, in Spanish and six indigenous languages. In this way, radio stations with limited opportunities or skills necessary for radio programming, can implement these productions in their own schedule and at the same time broaden their perspective on how a radio program can be done. One of the members, a 20-year old female locutor, explains how she got involved:

[40] This quote is from a recorded conversation between Marc Camp and Cecar Gomez, April 28 2010.
[41] The radionovela is titled *Aura Marina*, revolving around the adventures of a young village girl. This project has received funding from the New England Biolabs Foundation, and the 2010 episodes focused environmental themes (Cultural Survival 2010b).

> "…Because I am very interested in communication media, especially in *locucion*. And gradually, I got to attend seminars and training sessions to learn more. And then they invited me to other locations, to learn more about everything, to do interviews, and so on. So for more than two years, I have collaborated with them. And now, sometimes I go to training sessions, but now I am the one doing them! […] We work voluntarily, but when we go… like, my job is first of all to go and see how the villages are doing. For instance, two weeks ago I went with my *compañeras* to investigate about the problems with the lake. And also, we made small 'spots' [2-3 min. information slots]. Also, last month we went to San Marcos to investigate the minery problems. And this is affecting all of Guatemala, actually." (LO10)

Although this service clearly is a resource by helping out a vulnerable radio staff and by offering a significant contrast to the limited content in commercial radio, the programming is obviously more educational and one-way-oriented than participative and dynamic. However, as Cultural Survival underlines, the purpose of this service is to be dynamic in other ways, by facilitating for the more skilled volunteers to learn more and later teach other radio practitioners (IN4).

8.3 Thinking for themselves?

The locutores had a clear, shared notion about the purpose of community radio – the concept, goals, and important topics – which clearly the coordinators and instructors at the seminars have taught them. I believe this is an important basis for them to have in mind, both as a reminder and to maintain the distinctive format that distinguishes their service from mainstream media and religious radio stations. However, they also seemed quite dependent on what they had learned on the seminars instead of trusting their personal views or instincts:

> "We want to improve it, but the thing is that we don't have much time. But yes, we would like to have more training, more seminars, more visitors [radio people coming to train us], who can give us more ideas. Because we can't think of more ideas. But if there are more people who can help us… yes." (LO3)

Who is determining these 'ideas'? Does this way of learning "encourage local creative talent" (Pavarala & Malik 2005:19)?

'We can't find any news'

One example is their understanding of *news.* So far, the few news sections offered at the radio stations generally consist of selected news stories from the largest national newspaper *Prensa Libre*, which might be translated into their Maya language. Some radio stations are using other Spanish news sources that can be taken and broadcasted directly from the web.

Bearing in mind the general lack of access to such information, this is a fruitful service for the rural communities, a service that the community radio movement hopes to expand. The locutores working on this said they primarily look for both national and international news about politics, climate, migration to the US, and human rights issues. However, they are not offering their own local news service. Lack of resources again explains this, but their perceptions of news further seem to be colored by what mainstream media define as news. Journalist Saenz describes his experiences as teacher at radio seminars:

> "Many are saying that 'no, we don't have news here, it's so difficult to find any news'. And then there are lots of things to talk about! But we just need to know where to find them. People believe that news is about accidents, deaths, storms like the one we had now [Agatha]… So we need to teach the people about how to find news in a small community, so that people won't just read from the newspapers. The newspapers only have national news, and people want to hear news from their own community." (IN3)

The power of alternative media practices lies in their ability to challenge established regimes, which includes "what is to be considered as news, approaches to news gathering, decisions about who writes such news and how it is presented" (Atton 2009:272). Although the overall format of the Guatemalan radio stations is more open, informal and spontaneous than the more professional media outlets, they can still go much further. However, as Browne notes, it should not be surprising that minorities, who historically "have been served exclusively by majority-operated and –oriented electronic media for decades" (Browne 1996:72), or lived outside the modernized world, have "a limited view on how to function through those media themselves" (ibid), when the opportunity to produce their own media formats finally is possible. Despite the determined focus on representing a response to established structures, dominating commercial models for media practice can influence both the locutores' and the coordinators' abilities to think 'outside the box' and to develop alternative approaches. This can also be seen in how community media practitioners perceive the concept of journalism and journalists, which I will discuss in a separate chapter. Besides, given the fact that Guatemalan journalists already find it hard to fully utilize their watchdog role and to do more investigative journalism, it is no wonder that community radio practitioners feel prevented to develop their own 'fearless' alternative media channel.

A hierarchical relationship

Among the locutores I interviewed, only the eldest, German – a 71-year old craftsman with a

thoroughly overview of the Guatemalan history, the Constitution and indigenous rights – seemed to have developed a clear personal and critical view on their work as community radio practitioners, explaining how he enjoys commenting the news about politics, justice and other governmental issues, instead of simply reading from the newspapers:

> "When I give information about this kind of news, I rather ask: why are they doing this, and why is it like that? I see the Guatemalan laws as correct, but not the implementation. Or those who are negotiating. All the corruption – that someone who knows the police, the politicians, and the stakeholders – they go free and pay themselves out of it! Justice in Guatemala is not like it should be. Yes, I talk like that." (LO7)

German has been involved in radio for many years, always for his same life-long mission: to inform people about what is wrong in his country. He calls himself a 'revolutionary', in the sense that he wants to promote and use his people's right. Before starting his show at *Radio Sembrador*, his show at a local commercial radio station was removed, because the owner was afraid of 'politicizing' the radio: "But I was just talking about the Peace Accords, like 'why haven't they accomplished it?', and how they are utilizing it to win the people by saying 'yes, we have accomplished it'". At *Radio Sembrador*, he is mostly allowed to run his show as he wishes, although the coordinator has told him that he shouldn't offend the people. When I asked German what might have offended the listeners, he answered: "No, no. The people don't feel offended. No, well, maybe this is what he said because, like, community radio is also part of the oligarchy of this country. They don't want the people to protest" (LO7).

What does he mean by this? He is mainly referring to the repressive politics run by a few rich and powerful actors throughout the Guatemalan history, and the fear journalists have experienced in their work. However, he might also be touching upon the what critics of community media have argued, that community media only "replicate the moral, social and economic order" (Mattelart and Piemme in Romano 2010:23), and that "even successful alternative media are generally linked to social movements whose structure and organization have been established within the existing hierarchy of power" (ibid). In general, the locutores expressed respect and dependence on the coordinator at their radio station. The great help from Cultural Survival was often mentioned, as well as other contributors from abroad, sometimes referred to as "*los turistas*" (the tourists). German acts as his own master, while other locutores more or less unconsciously operates within the framework that they have been given. Limited experience and knowledge can partly explain this tendency, but it can

also reveal hierarchical social-cultural structures, which in order to dissolve will need much more than better equipment, better training or a legal community media.

How to encourage to more independent practices?

Journalist Saenz underlined that we must bear in mind that the Guatemalan community radio stations are still very young in their appearance: "We are acknowledged with the fact that community radio stations are lacking a lot – professionalism, technical skills, and content. We hope to achieve these three things within the next years" (IN3). First of all, the dependence on help and guidance illustrates a phase they need to pass before becoming more confident with the idea of having their own indigenous media with a deeper mission than just to offer religious or commercial music or provide general information. It takes time for community members and radio practitioners to become accustomed to the new format. So far, with the legal problem, a lot of energy is used on defending themselves instead of improving themselves.

The community radio movement has therefore come up with an idea to make "the trainers train the trainers" (IN4), which also transcends the idea of the content production team: To make locutores from one radio station that have succeeded on certain areas go and train another radio station that has not yet found any solution on this area. This method can help dissolving parts of the vicious circle and make the teaching process more sustainable and effective. It can strengthen the unity within the radio movement and their sense of belonging to a larger 'Maya radio community'. In the long term, this interaction might further develop new, independent and creative ways of radio production; encourage stronger self-determination through media expressions, and to think outside 'the majority box'. Instead of relating to mainstream media, the locutores themselves become each other's role models.

At the radio workshop in Quetzaltenango, I experienced the format itself as very interactive, with the seminar leaders encouraging the 40 participants to engage and express their own views and perceptions throughout the session. When talking about her experiences at the radio workshops, the youngest locutor I interviewed also signaled the broader potential of such meetings:

> "Many times we've met other young people from other locations. That's a help, to share ideas. They give their opinions, and we ours. For me this has helped a lot, because we see, like, how do they talk, and how can we adopt this as well." (IN8)

9. Participation

Drawing on Frances Berrigans' influential series of community media studies, Howley underlines that "community media is not 'simply' a matter of opening up the channels of communication to nonprofessional media makers. Rather, community media's raison d'être is to facilitate two-way communication within the local community" (Howley 2010:16). Access to information is not sufficient; a deliberative communication channel offers participation, dialogue and involvement at all levels.

Lack of resources challenge Guatemalan community radio stations to fully utilize the potentials of community radio. However, this won't necessarily prevent dynamic participation within the communities. As I have mentioned earlier, I have not been able to examine the community members' reception of community radio, but as far as I can go I will analyze the level of participation by looking at how the radio stations and the practitioners relate to their listeners and community members. How are they encouraging the community to share and discuss different views and interests? This is likely to tell us more about how Guatemalan community radio can work as tools for deliberative public spheres on the local level.

9.1 "La voz de la comunidad?"[42]

At a radio conference in Huehuetenango, the stage was decorated with a large banner, saying loud and clear: "La radio comunitaria es mi voz, tu voz, nuestra voz"[43]. Personally, getting access to the radio waves has never been as easy as when visiting these community radio stations. And I would argue that my European looks did not have anything to do with it. Rather, the locutores seemed pleased and relieved whenever anyone showed up voluntarily, asking to announce something or just send a greeting. But when I asked the locutores what a community radio should be like, they emphasized more on its role as an informative and educational service:

[42] "The voice of the community" – a common slogan used in the Guatemalan community radio movement.
[43] "Community radio is my voice, your voice, our voice".

> "This is what we gradually have created and what is community media today: to promote development, to promote education, health issues… and the culture, traditions and customs of our population, and to inform about the laws - our laws - and to inform them about our voices. And to get rid of gender, no discrimination... These are more or less the functions, yes." (LO10)

Undoubtedly, one idea behind having these informative topics is to finally provide access to vital information and through this create a general awareness of people's right to participate on their own premises in the Guatemalan civic and political life. Along with the informative format, the radio stations are encouraging participation among their listeners, by reminding them that "our doors and our telephone line are always open". Apart from this, they have weekly slots where representatives from institutions such as Anonymous Alcoholics, the town council or the health centre come and talk about issues and answer questions or comments from the listeners. *Radio Sembrador* has also launched a children's show, hosted by two children from the village[44].

The radio stations can measure a show's popularity in terms of telephone activity, which especially the staff at *Radio Ixchel* was conscious of: "If we notice that people are calling in during the show, this means that the show is accepted" (LO12). One female locutor at *Radio Ixchel* explained how the listeners not only came with positive remarks; they also commented on what she should do different: "But I think it's like they say, that the people are there to make you better. And this is how we can improve. One should really have space for this. It's criticism, but it's constructive criticism" (LO11).

Making people speak

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, the community radio concept is still new for the indigenous community life and might need more time to establish and to find its best suitable role in terms with local conditions. To open up the radio waves for new information and the people's voice instead of music, Spanish commercials or religious programming is not done overnight. The first challenge is to convert people's ideas about media formats. When Felix Hernandez started the radio station *Mujb'ab'l'yol* in Concepción in 1997, the format differed so drastically from the national and regional commercial radio stations that people in the

[44] The radio show is called *Niños de Estrellas* ('Star kids'), and has become very popular in San Pedro La Laguna. Two 9-year olds, a boy and a girl, from the village, are the hosts. I observed and participated on the show one Saturday (June 12, 1010). They were well prepared, talking about the environment and the importance of not throwing garbage in the village, playing children's songs (in Spanish) and letting visitors send greetings or sing a song.

village started asking for more music instead of topics about the Peace Accords: "They only wanted music, music, music. This was the system" (LO1). Hernandez and his *compañeras* realized they had to change the whole format, and implemented music in-between their topics:

> "Gradually people have learned that it is important to listen to other things. Interesting topics, and not only music. So there has been a change. […] But it's like if you learn something to a child when he is very young, he will learn it, while if you teach him bad things he will also learn this. Similarly, people were not used to listening to topics." (LO1)

Moreover, speaking out on air is not a matter of course for a historically marginalized and silenced population. Reluctance to speak out can derive both from power relations and conflicting or conservative views within the community. As Sparks notes, "the right to speak is always embedded in social relations and these generally give priority to one group and discourage another" (Sparks 2007:65). At the radio workshop in Quetzaltenango[45], the radio volunteers from several different radio stations discussed the problem with getting campesinos, *finca* (plantation) workers or women from their villages to speak out on air. They would often feel intimidated or shy and a common response could be: "Why do you need my name?". The locutores have personally been through this process themselves, and are aware of the barriers some people need to cross:

> "The truth is that not everyone has the guts. Now, people want to listen, yes, but they don't want to speak. But they are becoming more used to it now, and those who come can speak their own language. That marks a great difference, I think." (LO8)

> "Oh yes, many are a bit scared. And simply learning how to use your voice, how to pronounce everything, how to speak… it's gradually improving. But we still have these challenges." (LO12)

Sparks underlines that despite any conscious efforts to overcome this barrier and change established social relations, "it is often the privileged strata in the community who eventually come to dominate projects and emerge as the chief beneficiaries of the development process" (Sparks 2007:66). In this way, the processes of production in a community radio can reveal the already existing social structures within a community. In the Guatemalan villages, although Maya customs traditionally circle around collective action and to 'work for a common good', such established social relations are likely to shine through in the operation

45 The radio workshop 'Jovenes que aprenden de jovenes' in the city of Quetzaltenango, May 8, 2010.

of a community radio.

Women's voices

The question of women's voices becomes especially relevant here. Empowerment of women is "widely recognized as the key to achieving a range of classical development objectives" (Sparks 2007:62) and has gained "a significant dimension in community radio initiatives launched by community-based organizations that are seeking to deploy communication technologies for social change" (Pavarala & Malik 2007:216). In Guatemala, women have historically been designated a minor role in the public sphere. Along with the Latin American *machismo*[46] culture, violence against women is still a critical issue[47]. Women's participation is thus seen as a crucial symbol for a participatory democracy. An important goal for the Guatemalan community radio movement is to ensure gender equality both on the administrative and operational level, in order to have community radio stations represent all voices of their communities.

However, traditional Maya culture "promotes a clear distinction between the male social and political domain and the female domestic arena" (Cruz 1998:575), where men and women are responsible for different and separate activities. Seeking public office is considered a masculine mission (Ekern 2005:243). So far, men have also occupied the core of the community radio movement. But more women, especially younger women in their 20s, have become locutores the last few years. The five female locutores I interviewed had all noticed how their presence could have an impact on the rest of their community. They seemed very conscious on their role as female radio voices and how they, just by speaking out on air, could get more women to participate and use their own voices:

> "For us I think it's very good, because on many areas there are no women. And there are radio stations that might have one or two women. Because we women… many times we can't participate, like, take part in a group or something like that. We are seldom accepted, and if we are given space, then maybe the father or the family won't accept it." (LO4)

[46] *Machismo* is a widespread term describing the dominating position of men in Latin American societies, and a general repressive attitude towards women (Stevens 1973).
[47] Also stated in OECD's *2009 Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI).*

> "I began because here at the radio the committee decided that they needed more participation from women. Before we started we were afraid. No women come here to speak on the radio, almost no one comes. Here in an indigenous village the woman is discriminated; it is a woman who can't study, doesn't have rights to study – that is what the indigenous man says. And because of this, women can't come… how to talk in a radio? How can they if they don't know any letters?" (LO3)

> "I like the functions of the radio, because we have learned to make the best out of all the opportunities, especially our free spaces. Because not all women are given the opportunity to express themselves. And we have seen many benefits, especially… For instance, there are many women who come here and say that they would like to express themselves." (LO9)

These findings further support the findings of Pavarala & Malik's study of community radio in India. They claim that "women whose skills and confidence have been enhanced through media production, now act as agents to mobilize other women to participate" (Pavarala & Malik 2007:240). They also argue that traditional gender imbalances and inequalities are challenged when women and men collaborate in the radio production. At two of the radio stations I visited, there were just as many female as male locutores. *Radio Ixchel* further had more women than men, with a total of 11 women and nine men. Bearing in mind the women's central role on the domestic arena, it is not a matter of course that women have time to participate. The women I interviewed, however, were young and had not yet been married, which gave them a different position than married women. Still, one locutor expressed her gratitude for the men's approval:

> "How great that, also, the men help the children so that their wives can work in the radio. This is still not common, that the father takes care of the children. It's a bit difficult for this kind of work as well, because sometimes we are busy at nighttime. But how great that the fathers have faith in us and have given us the chance to participate in a radio." (LO11)

As my study was only able to identify the focus on female representation and how female locutores experienced their engagement, I cannot analyze further whether women's participation might empower their role in the private sphere. Also, I should take into account any presuppositions of gendered inequality that I carry with me from my own culture, as my sense of self as a woman is likely to be different from that of a Maya woman. The clear distinction between male and female roles in Maya culture does not immediately imply that their system carries an implicit gender inequality. When speaking about gender issues with the female locutores, I might unconsciously have imposed the Western ideal of gender equality. Anthropologists studying Maya culture have encountered similar challenges, where

what they see as gendered imbalances in a community is understood as 'gendered but not unequal power relations' from the Mayas' point of view[48]. Indigenous feminists in Latin America have proclaimed Western feminism primary as "a fight for individual freedom from a community commitment" (Krøvel 2006:200, my transl.), which translates badly into their local context. They have instead tried to unite feminism with the fight for indigenous people's collective rights (ibid).

Nonetheless, other studies have revealed significant potentials of minority women's entrance to media production. When Ruiz (2008) examined indigenous women's participation in a community radio project in Honduras, she found that it not only helped them break barriers by speaking out *through* the radio station, but also to overcome other obstacles *outside* the radio station. They felt empowered to break the silence in other arenas such as "family, community, the organization and larger social, political, cultural and economic spheres" (Ruiz 2008:123). Similarly, Pavarala & Malik saw how women's participation in community radio in India strengthened their self-worth and helped "raising their collective consciousness and understanding of their own social reality and problems" (Pavarala & Malik 2007:240). One of my own informants also emphasized a similar point, about how uniting with women at other radio stations, by "giving each other a boost and continue working together" (LO9) could strengthen a sense of unity and community among the female locutores.

Communication and feminist scholars are increasingly agreeing about the potential for new technologies of communication to strategically "advance the status of women in society and support women's empowerment" (ibid:217), and could be an interesting subject to look more into when the Guatemalan community radio stations have developed further.

Use of «authoritarian» sources

The focus on giving access to local authorities and other more 'authoritarian' sources on the radio is another characteristic signifying that the privileged strata are more likely to be the dominated voices of the local radio station. While criticism towards the dominant forms of journalism often highlight the media's uncritical elite-biased representations where experts and politicians are considered more 'newsworthy' sources, a problem for community media may be that those involved are community leaders themselves, or people with specific

[48] See for instance Brinton Lykes (1997).

positions within their indigenous community (Atton & Hamilton 2008:53).

As far as I understood, however, the radio staff at the five community radio stations I have used in my data material did not seem to have a significant higher status in the community. They were neither political candidates nor working for the town council, but simply regular village people with various occupations and interests in the community. Still, a closer look at the people who are most likely to be invited to the studio signifies similar tendencies as with mainstream media. I could not conduct a systematic examination of the use of sources to see whether some community members speak at the radio more often than others, but when asking whether the locutores invited guests for interviews etc., they primarily mentioned local political candidates, committee leaders, representatives from various institutions, or elders telling about the past. Again the reason for not interviewing other village people was explained with "because we don't have equipment to do interviews on the streets" (IN1).

Nevertheless, it is notable to bear in mind all the different types of committees, institutions and local organizations existing in a Guatemalan village, which could make many community members a representative of any sort. As Navarro found in the community outside of Lima in Peru, it can be "difficult to distinguish between leaders (non-popular actors) and ordinary people (popular actors)" (Navarro 2009:625). Again, we must take into account the different roles in a Maya community. The organizational life is structured in a different way from what an outsider immediately can uncover. From a Maya point of view, other power relations between the members can also be understood differently than what a media researcher can see, as with the question of men and women's roles.

Navarro further points out how a local radio station can stimulate and empower local leaders to improve their role as representatives: "collaborating with the radio has helped local leaders to improve their speaking skills and their self-awareness of their position as representatives" (Navarro 2009:625). As with other community members, Guatemalan community leaders may not be accustomed to speaking out about their agenda and issues on the radio. Moreover, by having to define their agenda on air, the community radio encourages more openness among the leaders in a community, which is not necessarily a matter of course in every Guatemalan village where decisions are made through customs, or in a country where corruption characterizes much of the political life. *Radio Ixchel* in Sumpango is, as far as I know, the only radio station in my data material with a permanent radio show led by representatives from the town council every week, where they are

informing about various topics and opening up the telephone line for any questions.

Participation in the production process

When studying the community radio projects in India, Pavarala & Malik found that the community members who had engaged actively in the production of a radio program, or any other activity aimed for the radio station were more committed listeners, paid more attention and identified more closely with the radio than people who were more like the traditional 'audience'. They conclude that "participation is the key to increasing listenership and involvement in community radio" (Pavarala & Malik 2007:250). A large majority of the village people was still "on the receiving end of programmes that are made 'by their own people' on themes that touch their lives closely" (ibid).

Based on what I was able to find myself, the same seems to apply for the Guatemalan community radio stations. First of all, the radio movement has already decided what topics should be important in the radio programming. These guidelines, along with what the locutores learn on the radio seminars, set premises for the whole schedule and probably give the coordinators and locutores a certain 'expertise' that cannot be applied by anyone: "We are the *junto directiva* (the board, committee), so we have meetings about how we can do things, what topics we should have, and how we can improve" (LO3). People are welcome to come with suggestions on shows - "as long as it in one way or another benefits the society" (LO9). But what exactly benefits their community? And who should decide this? Secondly, although the radio stations gladly receive requests from listeners about topics they would like to hear more of, they have not yet actively opened up for more participation in this process. There seem to be a quite sharp distinction between 'us – the locutores' that are informing 'they – the listeners'. The community radio practitioners, especially the coordinators, are in some ways the 'local experts' on community radio, and thus distanced from the community as a result of their knowledge and position - which might enforce the gap between them and the community.

In order to maximize the potential of an alternative media channel to be interactive, participative and effectively break with the hegemonic structures in the mainstream media, more deliberate focus on community members as active members of the radio station is needed. According to Pavarala & Malik, a rigid structure "appears to be superseding the process", and creates a fixed format that takes away a lot of freedom also for the volunteers (Pavarala & Malik 2007:253). If mainly trained reporters and studio managers are to decide

content and format, based on techniques and guidelines learned on radio seminars, what happens with the flexibility and simplicity of community radio?

9.2 A space for debate?

> "Yes, we've done that. For example, we've had… what do you call it…debates. Yes, for instance about economy – no, I mean politics. And also about taking advantage of people, or discrimination, and also racism. To what extent, or if it exists or not. After this people start calling in, saying what they think, their opinions. […] But only the other contributors from organizations do this, because they have knowledge about these issues. For instance, I could lead a debate, but I don't have grounds for doing it. They are more advanced, they have studied it [the topic]." (LO10)

A further prerequisite for deliberative community radio should be to open the radio waves for diverse interests and opinions in the local public sphere. By letting ordinary people "present an issue through the agenda of the radio" (Navarro 2009:625), the local media channel opens up for "the participation of all relevant community stakeholders, including the minorities, the marginalized, the disadvantaged and even those deemed as 'deviant'" (Romano 2010:4). Likewise, the Guatemalan community radio movement acknowledges that community radio should aim to "wake up a need among the people to discuss, speak and get the ideas on the table" (IN3). Although the radio stations provide open telephone lines for community members to call and express their views about the topic they are informing about, they have not been able to develop more structured forums, debates or opinion polls. Similar to what one of the female locutores mentions in the excerpt above, journalist Saenz emphasizes the need for preparing and coaching people how to lead a debate, in order to maintain a balanced conversation and to avoid potential conflicts (ibid). Nevertheless, is community radio the most appropriate forum for Guatemalan village life to have such discussions?

Discussion and decision-making: 'On air' vs. 'on the ground'

An incident I encountered in Todos Santos might give us an idea of common practice in a traditional indigenous village. Due to long-lasting problems with alcohol abuse, the

municipality has decided to prohibit any sale of alcohol. This is a local agreement, and people can still buy beer in other municipalities, but it is strictly forbidden and socially unacceptable to drink it or sell it in the village. However, there have been suspicions about secret sale of beer. On the night of the tropical storm Agatha, a man disappeared in the heavy rain and was found dead in the flooding river the day after. It quickly turned out that he had been drunk, which created an immediate outrage among the community members: Who had sold him beer? From Monday morning until late afternoon, more or less the whole village was gathered in the central park to discuss the issue and to find the ones who had been hiding beer in their houses. The dead body was placed in a cave in the middle and town council members and other representatives spoke out through a speaker. When I asked what the radio station would do in this kind of situation, the locutores said they neither had the intention of reporting from the central park, nor the possibility because of equipment. First of all, their role is to inform, and they had not considered inviting to similar discussions on air:

> "Because people who are only listening to such discussions might say that the radio is provoking the problem, and this is not the case. So here, every month we have meetings with the whole radio staff, where we say that we will not permit this. So like yesterday, it was only informed that they were looking for the guy." (LO4)

The radio staff seemed to have an implicit view on the alcohol ban to be the only acceptable solution for their village. Only one of them had mixed feelings about the issue, especially because the ban is only municipal and can easily lead to conflicts. However, discussing alcohol policy at the radio stations, for instance by inviting people with two contradicting views, is probably out of the question:

> "This is against the viewpoint of the coordinator and the oldest locutor. It is considered as wrong. They fear it could make people change their minds and agree with those who would like the sale of alcohol to continue." (IN1)

This kind of situation would naturally invite to public debate in my Norwegian context, either through national or local media. I was not able to examine how the decision to prohibit sale of alcohol had processed and whether it was made through deliberation. Regardless of this, it is obvious that established customs in the community make them prefer solving such political issues through other forums than through the radio station. The radio station will only confirm what the community has agreed upon. It is primarily there to *confirm* the 'common good' of its community, and the locutores do not feel free to present such sensitive issues. This structure challenges the idea of media as a tool for deliberative public spheres,

where different viewpoints can be expressed. A deliberative radio station would then be able to "contest established structures" (Navarro 2009:627) and transform the public sphere. Although the Guatemalan community radio can develop more space for debate in the future, what might hinder an indigenous radio station to fulfill these characteristics?

Civil society in Maya communities

One problem might be the notion of civil society in Maya communities. To look at civil society as "a distinct field of activities between the state and the market" (Ekern 2005:250) implies identifying individual wills that through processes of socialization construct a "joint government" (ibid). However, after studying the development of the local government in the municipality Totonicapán, Ekern found that the *K'iche'an* community life centers more on the "internalized communal will" (ibid) than an individual thinking universe. Bearing in mind how I defined 'community' in chapter 2, and its broader meaning of the concept in the Maya world, the Maya identity further has a strong collective dimension, where a person's way of being is developed as a "social soul" (ibid:140). In Totonicapán, the community as a collective self and a cultural defender plays a central role in the structure and organization of Maya life: "It is thought that it possesses its own life-force (*k'u'x*), and by working together its inhabitants will develop similar 'ways of being' and social skills (*etamb'al*)" (ibid:78). This observation makes me question how a local media channel can encourage individual views to come through. Or, put more drastically, would this pursuit even go against the core of Maya culture?

Based on his own findings and the western premise of civil society, Ekern concludes that "due to the pronounced overlap between the communal and the individual selves there is no civil society in Mayan communities" (Ekern 2005:251). One must rather speak of "a process that involves a close dialectic with an internalized communal will" (ibid). Although Ekern only describes community life in Totonicapán, I believe his description can also reveal central patterns of a village such as Todos Santos, where the collective civic life proved very visible and where they similarly as in Totonicapán perceive their community as a defender "against the world of the Ladinos" (ibid:78) – by for instance determining their own local laws. Or, as Mendoza ironically described his community: "The Maya, like the Todos Santeros… The people here are sometimes like chickens, you know. Like, if someone says 'come over here!', they will all come running in the same direction, without thinking any further" (IN1).

Deliberation in Maya communities

In true democratic thinking, the search for unity and a common good should be constructed through deliberative processes that are open to dissent and disagreements – not only consensus (Miralles 2010:148). However, is it justified to say that their collective way of organization and thinking take away any hope of a civil society? As with my Western, 'modern' view on gender, the dynamics in a Maya community might be so fundamentally different from my own horizon of understanding, that I am not able to see the process of what Ekern defines as "a close dialectic with an internalized communal will" (Ekern 2005:251). At least, this is a process that would be more visible outside of the radio stations.

A challenge for deliberation in more heterogeneous groups with different social life forms, class or ethnicities is that the privileged strata of the community are likely to dominate the decision-making processes (Benhabib 2002: 135-136). The aim for a common good is then difficult to achieve. This is certainly the case for Guatemala on a national level, with the deeply ingrained social and cultural differences. On a local level, however, the collectivity and conscious search for a common good in many indigenous communities already seem to carry a distinctive deliberative character. Community commitment and identity is more intertwined, resulting in more homogenous groups. Still, due to the overlapping connection between individuals and group, and the pursuit for an internal "right order" (Ekern 2005:78), opposition in indigenous communities can also be risky, as it can go at the expense of the community membership. As for Todos Santos and the alcohol ban, you would clearly get the whole community on your door if you had not followed these rules.

Sparks underlines that although technical changes, like a community radio project, can *initiate* social change, more fundamental changes on other levels are needed:

> "It is often very difficult indeed to alter deep-rooted patterns of human behavior, and it is often unrealistic to expect communication to do that on its own. Very often, the communication project requires, as a condition for its success, other substantial social changes as well, and without them it will likely prove ineffective. The process of change can rarely be restricted simply to technical change". (Sparks 2007:195)

Similarly, it takes substantial changes for a small community radio station to change the local public sphere in which they operate. However, should this necessarily be the purpose? In the case of Guatemalan community radio practice, it seems like deliberative talks and discussions 'on air' are so far not suited for the Maya community life. When any deliberation occurs, it is developed through other forums.

9.3 A note on a successful example: *Somos de Hoy*

Lastly, I will present one notable example that despite all circumstances can demonstrate a shift towards using local media to monitor democratic and political processes, and to allow conflicting views between community members and authorities come through on air. The dynamics in communities are different in nature, and during my fieldwork I chose to find out more about a specific radio program that had been mentioned and highlighted by different sources I met on my way.

Prensa Libre journalist René Edgar Saenz, an experienced university-educated journalist engaged in the community radio movement and the regional community radio association AMECOS, has for 12 years voluntarily run a radio show called *Somos de Hoy*. It is aired simultaneously every Thursday on 11 other local religious and community radio stations in the Department of Sololá around lake Atitlan. Saenz defines it as a "very polemic radio program" (IN3), with news, comments and announcements, where the key idea is to provide a public space for the people to comment on the local politics and social services, to criticize or to ask the authorities to see the needs they got. The show is mainly aired in Spanish, but Saenz's loyal *compañero* volunteers as his assistant, translating parts of the news and conversations into the local language *Tzju'l.* The show's development has been a tough process. Authorities have several times tried to expel him and shut down the show. For these reasons, Saenz had to move his show twice from one commercial radio station to another and finally to the community radio station *Radio Roca* in the town Sololá. He has been accused for selling radio frequencies and for forcing community people, simply to make him stop:

> "The large radio organizations, that are making up the large commercial stations – they have accused me, slandered me, and they got in the Ministerio Publico. And the Ministerio got part of this game too, because they are in charge of the people economically, so they tried to catch me, and… The idea was to discourage me and to destroy my journalistic career. But thanks to God, they haven't achieved this, because I am continuing, I am not doing anything against the law. On the contrary, I am helping the people, so that they express themselves, that they speak out, and so that at lest they can understand their problems. And I am willing to do this, although doing journalism in Guatemala is problematic." (IN3)

So what makes *Somos de Hoy* such a 'dangerous' program? Despite having an experienced well-educated journalist as host, *Radio Roca* only provides basic equipment with two microphones and no equipment to do interviews on the street. Still, according to Saenz and the impression I got when visiting the village, the show has become such a central part of local political and administrative life that nearly every public office in town switches

on the radio Thursday morning. And the caller knows that the authority he addresses might be listening. In this way, the show opens a communication channel between the citizen and the authorities, a much quicker way to get through than by personally trying to speak to a judge, the mayor or the police. Also, if there is a technical problem somewhere, with water or electricity or other issues, Saenz's assistant goes immediately to the location to confirm the issue and to let the authorities hear it. The show has revealed several critical cases and gradually achieved status as the 'watch dog' of Sololá:

> "We've made strong proclamations concerning corruption, bad medical service, or… strong announcements about bad funding. Money that was meant for health has been used for other things. And now, I feel that we have changed many things here in our community. Through the show – through the proclamations, through the comments. Sololá has been a place full of conflicts. There are many problems here, with insecurity, lots of problems in relation to drugs, corruption in the institutions…*But* gradually we are improving." (IN3)

Through his radio show, Saenz has become a central figure in the village and surrounding villages as the people's representative. However, a further consequence of being a professional journalist is that Saenz represents an authority himself. He has gained a powerful position that not any community radio locutor manages to achieve. The town of Sololá, from where *Somos de Hoy* is aired, is also more Ladino-influenced and developed than the kind of community Ekern refers to, and is probably more open for 'western individualism' and conflicting views. By addressing several smaller communities, the show further deviates from the idea of a community radio serving for its own municipality only.

Although conditions are different and Saenz breaks with the idea of using unprofessional media workers, *Somos de Hoy* still signals the potentials for local media in Guatemala to challenge deep-rooted established structures and even transform the local public sphere. It depends, however, if this kind of radio program could be developed in a municipality such as Totonicapán or Todos Santos, where a stronger collective community life reigns. If so, would this require a fundamental change in the whole community? And what would then happen to the Maya culture?

I will let these questions rest for now, by moving on to how the locutores perceive their role and title at the radio stations. Within their context, Saenz represents the 'professional journalist' as defined by the dominating western formats. If Guatemalan community radio aims to be a contrast to mainstream media, does it mean that journalism is disclaimed or could we still define their work as an alternative form of journalism – despite limitations in

equipment, training and social structures?

10. Role understanding

I have, until now, purposely used the general term *locutores* when referring to the radio practitioners. They used this term as a general reference when speaking about themselves, and it is the term most frequently used about their commercial counterparts. However, as we have seen, the Guatemalan community radio practitioners deliberately identify themselves as a response to the commercial radio format. In this chapter, I will look more into how they define this role.

I considered this question important because the way the locutores describe and identify themselves could tell me more about how the radio stations relate to and interact with the community members. It could also reveal more about whether their reflections are influenced by the dominant occupational ideology of journalism or if they have developed a more independent understanding. Through this, I hoped to demonstrate new or earlier described patterns of any kind of *alternative journalism*, as Atton (2005, 2008, 2009) defines the various forms of media practice arising outside the mainstream media.

10.1 "What are you?"

All the locutores in my data selection were asked about how they would describe their role or title as radio volunteers. Are they thinking of themselves as journalists? Would you for instance need education to be considered a journalist? They appeared to have different notions and definitions of themselves, which not only demonstrates the ambiguity of the term *locutores,* but also that they for different reasons had not reflected thoroughly on this or answered in line with what they had learned on the seminars. First of all, the majority of the answers confirm that they do not define themselves as journalists:

> "We are *comunicadores* (communicators, communication workers)." (LO2)
>
> "We are *programadores* (broadcasters, announcers)." (LO9)
>
> "We are *comunicadores sociales* (social communicators)." (LO12)
>
> "Mmmm… I don't know what to call it. Maybe… first of all, to be a journalist means to investigate, but locutores, I think, means to clarify something, and first of all make sure that the people won't change the radio channel." (Mario)
>
> "We are not journalists. […] A locutor is the person in the studio, the guy with the microphone, instead of a journalist." (LO1)

As the last quotes indicate, the locutores defined the difference between them and journalists by referring to limitations in equipment: "Because journalists are more out in the field, while we are inside the studio…" (LO9). "A journalist should go where it happens, and inform the radio. And we don't have equipment to do this yet" (LO3). However, why should this be a prerequisite when journalist Saenz never leaves the studio during his radio show *Somos de Hoy*, as well as other radio announcers and broadcasters?

More training = more independent?

The difference between the locutores and journalists is further explained by lack of training and education. All the locutores emphasized a need for more training in order to "do more journalism". This training must come from the outside:

> "We are thinking about how we could do more journalism, but to do this we would like some help from someone – how to do journalism, how is it to work like this. So far we haven't received any help to do this, only to report or something like that. So if someone would like to come and teach us, we are ready." (LO2)

This attitude is similar to what I noted about the dependency on coordinators and seminar leaders and that the locutores might need time to develop more individual freedom in their practices. It further demonstrates Browne's argument that indigenous people, as well as other minorities who historically have been excluded from media and the dominating public sphere, naturally will have limited prerequisites to 'think outside the box' or to immediately find their own way of media production when the opportunity finally comes (Browne 1996:72). Not the least, it demonstrates the dilemma when subordinate voices or more traditional cultures meet the dominating structures of modern media practice.

The question of role definition among broadcasting workers was also a topic when Forde et al. conducted a larger study of the indigenous community media sector in Australia. Mainly due to governmental support and a national indigenous radio service, the radio stations are slightly more developed, compared to Guatemalan radio stations. Furthermore, 43 percent of the 35 Australian news-workers interviewed had studied journalism or media studies. Only half of them were working on a voluntary basis. When asked to described themselves, "more than half of the news-workers described themselves as 'journalists' rather than broadcasters, activists, volunteers, and so on" (Forde et al. 2003:327-328). Their findings further showed that through education and training they are also capable of adapting and reconsidering the practices and their role in line with the local context: "So rather than

blindly copying outside models of journalism, community radio producers 'invent' their own ways of making sense of the world" (ibid:332).

As a result, Forde et al. notes that in the community sector "the definition of journalist is a fluid one" (ibid:328). Their multi-leveled work tasks, by being involved in many stages of the production, explained this fluid role. The radio stations' characteristics varied distinctly – "from community to community – from region to region" (ibid:332).

These findings suggest that when community radio workers have more training, they will feel less dependent on help from the outside and develop their own way of 'making sense of the world' from their local perspective. Based on what I have earlier noted about how lack of training and experience made the Guatemalan radio practitioners move further, I believe it does not necessarily mean that they will need professional education, but that they with more training can broaden their idea of journalism to something that they are in the position to apply.

A response to the 'oligarchy of journalism'

The majority of my informants seem to have an idea of journalism practices as to do with reporting from the streets about accidents and other happenings, writing in a newspaper, having professional education from the university, or other practices that they have not yet been taught. Only two of the locutores – the two eldest informants – would go as far as defining their work as journalism, by deliberately opposing any established criteria for journalism and the need for journalism education. Despite their lack of education, they have developed a more critical and free-minded understanding of the concept:

> "When someone starts giving information, and starts motivating the people – that's journalism. So yes, it's journalism. Maybe not other places, but here, yes. And like I said, I have learned what I do only on seminars. You don't necessarily need education to do journalism." (LO8)

> "Well, like I – I haven't had any formal education at the university. But I have read a lot, I have collected news… […] Because of this, I don't think I need it. The university shouldn't be given all the credit for education. Like for me, my life is my university. In one way, these titles, these degrees and so on – they are just a result of the power of the system. Why do we need them, anyway? Can't I call myself a journalist?" (LO7)

Their reflections clearly demonstrate what the various alternative responses to professionalized and ideal-typical journalism suggest: to demand a reconsideration of the established forms. The eldest and most free-minded locutor again turns to his well-used term

'oligarchy' when describing his theory of the power of Guatemala's big media corporations. According to him, the majority of Guatemalan journalists are accomplices to the oligarchy maintained by the government:

> "So in terms of the oligarchy of journalism, we would be *comunicadores sociales.* Not exactly journalists. Because we don't write or work like the journalists. So this comes from a culture transferred from generation to generation. But I think, they also say that the majority of the journalists - the ones at the big radio stations, for instance – are owned by this Mexican *señor* […], that they have been bought up by this Guatemalan oligarchy." (LO7)

What he defines as 'the oligarchy of journalism' obviously stems from the oligarchic period in Guatemala and Latin America. The media systems developed during this period and continue to carry certain oligarchic characteristics (Rockwell & Janus 2003:104). He is further referring to the absence of independent, investigative journalism in Guatemala (IN2, IN3) and the "the claim that it is only within professionalized and institutionalized media structures that journalists may practice" (Atton 2009:272), which is a common view among the community of professional journalists. Also *Prensa Libre* journalist Saenz shares this 'professional' view:

> "… there are people who want to do journalism, and then we can't say no. We have to find a way so that they can get a paper where it says 'journalist'. But these people are poor, usually they cannot attend university. So we have to find out how to finance these seminars and trainings for the professionalization of the personnel." (IN3)

In line with the dominating institutional media structures, Saenz emphasizes the need for a 'paper', a diploma or a license as a proof for a formal title – a view most of the locutores seem to share. This further signifies that the system they are shaped within has not opened up for recognizing citizen-based journalism. Instead, their perceptions are dominated by institutional power relations between those with 'a paper' and those without.

At *Radio Sembrador,* for instance, a *compañero* working in a local media outlet has for eight years provided the radio station with information when there is any 'news' from the field. He simply phones the radio station and the locutores transmit all the information: "'I've got some information', he says. And we transmit all of it. Because he has studied journalism, so he helps us with informing the people" (LO9). The locutores at *Radio Sembrador* clearly expressed a respect for this more educated *señor*; that his position gives him power and competency to do something they cannot do. They shared the same attitude

towards Saenz's show *Somos de Hoy,* which *Radio Sembrador* transmits every Thursday.

Still, despite acknowledging the need for more professional training, the coordinator at *Radio Ixchel* also starts questioning the conventional genres when reflecting more about their role. After stating that they are *comunicadores sociales,* he continues:

> "But actually, we don't have any specific title, everyone can come and talk and do what we do. There is no license for being a locutor in a community radio. But we are completely different from commercial radio. In that way I would also describe what we do as alternative communication." (LO12)

When I ask whether 'alternative communication' could be related to alternative forms of journalism, he answers: "Oh yes, absolutely. When I am on the street or at an event interviewing people with my cell phone – isn't that journalism, for instance?" (LO12).

'Community journalism' in the Maya sense

> "Well, in the morning, I just wake up the people, tell them that now it's time to work and so on. And then there are some announcements, about meetings and so on. And at 7, I'm speaking about the animals, that the people must take care of them, the dogs…and all of them. There are people who are going to the mountains, and I wish them good luck and say they shouldn't kill the plants. […] Yes, I say this every day. […] And then at 8, I send greetings to people who might be in bed, because they are sick or something. And I tell them not to be sad, and to keep on going. Then, at 9 to 10, it's time to send greetings to people who are at work, and put on some marimba, so that people will be happy wherever they are." (LO4)

Forde et al. notes that "if we consider journalism as a method of expression and communication which occurs in a variety of settings, we should expect it to operate differently in different 'public arenas' – for example, at the level of the community station or the media corporation" (Forde et al. 2003:318). If we further consider alternative or community journalism as "alternative frameworks for making sense of the world through the lens of local communities" (ibid:315), we should look at what this 'lens' implies for a Guatemalan indigenous community. In other words, what could journalism imply in Maya communities?

In the above excerpt one radio volunteer describes his daily morning shift at the radio station in Todos Santos. It is a quite ritual procedure where he addresses nature, animals and the people in his village. Without having examined the listeners' judgments, it seems obvious that this format and style can reinforce the feeling of belonging to a community or simply being seen and valued as an indigenous person. This locutor has no education; he speaks limited Spanish and cannot read. He said himself that he has gained more self-

confidence by learning to speak out publicly. Now that he simply articulates his own life-world and experience through the radio, he can encourage to a strengthened internal identity in the community. Strictly speaking, if we further bear in mind the ambiguity of journalism and the collective meaning of Maya identity and the meaning of *community* for indigenous communities, there should be nothing wrong in calling this community journalism through the Maya lens.

10.2 «Comunicadores sociales»

The locutores' own perceptions of their role can reveal more about how they relate to their communities. It struck me after my fieldwork how I – a Western journalist and student – might have imposed the question of whether they are journalists or not. Why should we call it journalism? Is it a goal? They all expressed this as a wish, but by encouraging them to reflect upon whether they can be called journalists and are practicing journalism, I am also revealing that I belong to the institutionalized view on journalism myself and that I judge their work from this point of view – from inside my own 'box'. Here, another cultural challenge arises, similar with what I encountered when trying to understand the Maya community life and gender roles. I believe this makes it hard – or perhaps simply irrelevant – for me to try comparing the Western professional practice with their practice. In line with the hermeneutic approach and as far as my cultural and historical experiences allow, I should first of all try to move away from the dominating system in which I belong, in order to reach a deeper level of understanding.

When the majority defines their role as something to do with *communication*, where the term *comunicadores sociales* was most frequently used, I must further look at what the definition implies for them. This term is also what Henderson found in her geography-oriented analysis of how the 1996 Telecommunication reform has affected the provision of and access to community radio initiatives: "In both workshops and meetings as well as in formal interviews, community radio practitioners demonstrated a marked tendency to self-identify as *comunicadores sociales* (social communicators) rather than *locutores* (announcers)" (Henderson 2008:95). The term *locutores* suits more the commercial radio broadcasters, who "are seen as superficial, unidirectional and out of touch with community concerns" (ibid).

One-way communicators?

What, then, does *social communicator* imply in the Guatemalan context? Henderson notes that "the term *comunicador social* is common throughout Latin America, where many universities list it as a degree program (either conflated with or distinct from journalism)" (ibid:96). In fact, since the 1960s and 70s, many university programs throughout Latin America have increasingly been titled '(Mass or Social) Communication' instead of 'Journalism', in order to institutionalize the field to something broader than journalism studies (Islas & Arribas 2010). Henderson further observes that by serving as 'a school', the Guatemalan radio practitioners have become "local leaders, role models, trusted advisors and, not infrequently, informal ombudspersons" (ibid:99).

Despite the advantages this role brings, similar to what I have earlier noted when describing the communicative and informative strengths of community radio, this finding supports my impression of the locutores and the coordinators as some kind of 'experts', which develops a certain distinction between them and the listeners (see chapter 9). From a 'Maya point of view', then, a social communicator is the person who communicates *anuncios* (announcements) and *concejos* (advice) and informs the community about what he or she – or someone above – perceives as an important benefit for the community. By focusing on providing information and educational services for 'the common good' rather than deliberately encouraging dynamic, participative communication, they are more or less unconsciously maintaining a one-way oriented understanding of their role as social communicators, with a primary goal to inform a more or less uninformed audience and to support the established consensus.

Footprints of other social structures

As I described in chapter 2, alternative forms of journalism further call for more focus on participative communication, civic engagement and to encourage voices of the voiceless to speak out. This naturally puts community media and its participative nature in a fruitful position. Hence, it would be wrong to put all the blame on the community radio workers, as they can only fulfill their role if the people around them are actually responding to a dynamic participation. We have seen that other ingrained social structures in a Maya community can be one reason for the mobilization challenges and the problem with getting people to speak out on air. Another reason might be that people are not yet accustomed to the opportunities or the purpose of their local radio station, which then limits a more dynamic interaction and engagement. In order to function well, as with any democratic media outlets, community

members as well as the locutores should be aware of the deliberative opportunities this communication channel brings.

A quick look at the format of religious radio might give us a better understanding. The numerous religious radio stations that have operated for many years are, as with the commercial radio stations, structured in a very different format than what the concept of community radio encourages. The majority of the radio stations that can be defined as community radio today, started out as religious stations and have later developed towards a more community-oriented format. The coordinator at *Radio Sembrador* explained how they started as a religious station with Christian music and religious *consejos* (advice, recommendations):

> ”Because we didn’t know how to do it […]. But then we heard about the law and all, and started thinking more about the community. […] We saw it as a need. Because there was nothing else. And the association [AMECOS] told us, as well, that we should make programs that are necessary for the community” (LO8).

Instead of being ‘the voice of the community’, Evangelist and Catholic radio stations are ‘the voice of God’, through readings from the Bible, Christian songs and daily preaching by one of the local pastors. And the pastors are the ‘mouthpiece’ of the higher powers. This is a distinct one-way format, as with the commercial radio stations, which instead are overloaded with announcements, music and Spanish-speaking hosts. It is then understandable that Guatemalan communities, more or less unconsciously, still looks at the practice of radio production this way and that this format maintains the view of locutores as informers and one-way communicators.

11. Conclusion

The purpose of this study has been to explore the nature of community radio in Guatemala. By emphasizing on the point of view of the radio practitioners, I wanted to explore how they perceive and experience their local radio station and their role as *locutores*. I further wanted to contribute with findings about what role community radio plays in the communities and how the radio stations interact with the community members. This twofold emphasis on both the role of the radio practitioners and the radio station itself comes from the participatory nature of community media, where the relationship between radio staff and community members is often diffuse and interrelated. It is by looking at the processes of production, within the context where community radio operate, that we are likely to understand more about the practices and why the radio practitioners do as they do. My overall intention has been to reveal potentials for Guatemalan community radio practice to operate as tools for an alternative deliberative public sphere, within a context of political, social and political inequality. I will now sum up my main findings and through this reflect more upon central issues.

11.1 Summing up main findings

I will start with my two specific research questions: What is the role of community radio in Guatemalan indigenous communities? How are the Guatemalan community radio practitioners experiencing and perceiving their work? Examining indigenous community radio is especially interesting because indigenous populations for a long time have been excluded from participation in society and from the national media system. Apart from providing access to vital information and serving as a channel for cultural and linguistic promotion, alternative media gives minority voices a chance to develop their own formats. What characterizes the Maya population's community radio format?

The illegal problem

The introductory part of my analysis concerned the legal dilemma for the community radio movement. The fight for a legal space in a non-democratic media landscape represents a fundamental barrier for Maya community radio projects, where the feeling of not being heard and the feeling of how authorities always have worked against them is something they are

carrying throughout their work. This fight illustrates one of several similar challenges that the large indigenous population in Guatemala is still faced with. Multiethnic and multicultural representation on a wide range of areas is still limited, preventing Guatemala to work as a multiethnic state. Although the community radio stations have been able to operate as 'pirate stations' without much interruption over the latest years, their work for a more democratic media landscape cannot be fully accomplished without a fundamental legislative change. Consequently, this context should naturally make them even more determined to continue and to represent a response to the elite-dominated system they are in.

Central characteristics

Community radio aims to fill essential gaps in the media landscape and the cultural and social landscape of Guatemala. In chapter 6 and 7 I demonstrated what so far seem to be the most important strengths of the community radio services: they aim to be cultural promoters and essential channels for communication and information. They are bringing neglected and ignored forms of expression out of the private sphere and to the airwaves. Cultural radio programming in Maya languages can promote the sense of belonging and legitimizes the Maya culture to the public sphere and the 'modern' world. This does not, however, immediately lead to a renewed appreciation of indigenous culture on a national level and in the larger public sphere. The radio stations might *fill* a gap, but the community format is not capable of *bridging* the gap. Other, more substantial social changes are needed to fill this gap. Still, by offering a communication and information channel in a local language, where people can express themselves, hear about the Peace Accords, human rights, health and environmental issues, community radio has an educative strength which can stimulate development and empower a neglected population on a broader level of society.

Chapter 8 explained more about how a vicious circle – lack of vital equipment, financial resources, training facilitations and staffing concerns – is affecting the potential for community radio to change more of the environment in which they operate. I discussed how other ingrained social structures further determine this feeling of dependence on outside factors, structures that are maintaining a certain hierarchical relationship between professional and non-professional media workers. The locutores generally felt dependent on help from more experienced actors when developing their programming and formats. The radio stations are still very young and although the radio practitioners are determined to offer a contrast to commercial media formats, they have not yet managed to fully challenge the

established structures.

Participation in Maya communities

Chapter 9 looked more into the participation level between the radio stations and the communities, in order to see whether the radio stations relate to their communities through an open, dynamic process. As far as I was able to examine this process, the informative perspective seems to dominate, where the locutores are informing the community, instead of the community media 'ideal' with an interwoven relationship between producers and participants. One problem is to get community members involved and accustomed to the community media format or to get people to speak out on air in the first place, when they historically have been more or less banned from participation in the national media. Even so, under any circumstances, to what degree is this ideal relationship between producers and audience actually possible? Won't there always be someone who has a leading role in this process?

Another key factor is the nature of Maya community life and Maya identity, which among else is characterized by collective collaboration towards a common good. According to scholars, this is a process with less emphasis on the individual, with the Maya identity being a 'social soul'. I questioned whether it would be unnatural or inappropriate to have deliberative talks and decisions take place on air instead of merely through traditional direct interaction in the traditional Maya community manner. Saenz's radio show in Sololá illustrates an exception, which has proved to be an effective tool for social change and to connect citizens with the authorities. However, due to the host's background and the different surroundings, I cannot immediately compare the program with the radio stations in my data material.

The role of community radio as an 'informer' and 'educator' in the communities was further revealed when looking more into the radio practitioners' reflections about their role. The term *social communicator* was used most frequently and is a common term in media education programs at Latin American universities. Although I had hoped to find clear examples of any kind of alternative journalism, lack of training and their dependence on guidelines from above made many of the radio practitioners consider journalism practice as something that they are not in position to apply. The 'oligarchy of journalism' and the power of dominating media formats are influencing both style and self-identification. This is further a tricky question for a Western media researcher to look at, as I already carry my own

presuppositions of journalism. The most central issue should be what the locutores as Maya people experience and understand their practice so far. As social communicators they clearly wish to represent the common good of their communities and to work for the development of their people. Other social structures are refraining them to expand their practice more independently, as well as the fact that the concept of community radio in a Guatemalan context is still very new.

11.2 The question of deliberation

This leads me to my final question for my study of Guatemalan community radio. In what way can community radio work as a tool for deliberative local public spheres in indigenous communities? Studies on community media have asked similar questions, in order to reveal the nature of the practice and because these alternative channels can open up, expand the local public spheres or empower minority voices to take part in the larger national sphere. In terms of Western democratic theories, a deliberative alternative public sphere presupposes an active and dynamic civil society, where different individual voices are encouraged to express themselves and feel empowered to take part of and participate in public life. However, due to the very different structures it is plausible to conclude that what corresponds deliberative talks and civil society in an indigenous village is likely to be quite different from the dynamics in my own society.

Many voices versus one voice

First of all, my study has showed how the community radio format opens up opportunities for people to speak out publicly, to manage their own projects and to gain more self-confidence. Bearing in mind the historical conditions, I would argue that having a local media channel in an indigenous language has an empowering value in itself. As Romano highlights, these personal attributes "are critical characteristics that citizens require if they are to be able to engage effectively in civil society and democratic life" (Romano 2010:23-24). Also, as I have pointed out earlier, the locutores highlighted that an important role of community radio is to work for the development of their villages and the indigenous population, "so that it can advance a little bit". In this, they refer to the revitalization and preservation of Maya cultural traditions, as well as information about human rights, environment and health. The developmental perspective is central in theories on community media. In order to assist this development process, the community radio workers should help

the communities in "'voicing critique and articulating alternative visions of society' and 'challenging and changing oppressive structures'" (Shah in Romano 2010:26).

The Guatemalan community radio format is clearly filling a fundamental democratic gap neglected at the national level, and I believe that they through this role gradually can increase participation at a higher level of society and civic life, if the format will be able to develop further. Women's participation is one example, which according to other studies can challenge traditional imbalances and empower traditionally silenced voices. Also, by having local politicians and village representatives to talk about their agendas on air, they might get more obliged to be open about their work and intentions. Ideally, in a context where corruption is part of everyday life, this can be of great significance to improve local democracy.

Here, however, I should be careful with letting my cultural presuppositions and my understanding of gender equality and power relations bring to any hasty conclusions. The different roles of women and men and the collective community life of the Mayas show a different life-world than my own. Why should the Western 'normative' ideals be used as a defense for changing gender roles? Do indigenous people need to be like us? Philosophers have reflected upon similar dilemmas, concerning whether normative principles constructed within western modernity should be seen as "superior to the ones we find in other kinds of societies" (Honneth in Jacobsen & Lysaker 2010:166-167).

My findings further suggest that it can be inappropriate or unnatural to make space for more deliberative talks on the radio stations I visited. Lack of equipment and training was also explained as a reason for this, but first of all the radio station's role in the community is seen to represent and inform about the *consensus* of its respective community, something in which the example about ban of alcohol in Todos Santos demonstrates. The journalistic ideal of 'objectivity' is clearly challenged here, as the radio practitioners are directly attached to their communities and might unintentionally leave out any views that are seen as deviant or conflicting within the community. Furthermore, when the Guatemalan community radio practitioners do not look at their role as to encourage more active, dynamic two-way communication, this is likely to limit the community radio's potential to develop a more critical 'watchdog' function, which is one of the ideal roles of journalists and democratic media channels.

Nevertheless, this is not necessarily the ideal role when seen from an indigenous point of view. In the end, the question is also whether people actually are interested in participating

in the local radio station, and what *they* feel this community service should provide – which a reception analysis or a closer look at the dynamics in Maya communities could have revealed. In this connection, my possibilities as media researcher also fall short, as I cannot go into a more anthropological role and explore public deliberation and democratic processes on the local level.

Community vs citizen

Many questions have surfaced while working on my thesis. The meaning of 'community' as an extended family and the collective Maya identity clashed with many of my own presuppositions. I knew that Guatemala lacks a lot to develop a participatory democracy, but it took a long time for me to realize that indigenous communities traditionally have based their community life and local government through deliberative processes. In this connection, who are then the actors in a deliberative public sphere – are they collective or individual citizens? And what should be the role of a *locutor,* or *social communicator,* in this context?

As far as I can analyze, the representation of the 'common good', consensus and unity of the respective community, seems to dominate in the Guatemalan community radio field. This also makes me hold on to the emphasis on *community media* instead of Rodriguez's concept of *citizens' media.* Citizens' media focuses specifically on deliberation by aiming to address participants as active citizens, which can reveal and challenge established power relations and encourage people to develop their own agency. The Guatemalan community radio format has a few steps to go before possibly reaching a more dynamic character, but I am determined that we should still characterize them as *community radio*. For indigenous communities in a Guatemalan context, community radio is first of all present to serve as a preserver and supporter of its own people and 'family' and to represent or maintain a unity in the fragmented, unstable society they are in.

One last personal anecdote might clarify this purpose. Before actively starting my data collection and visits to the community radio stations, I stayed two weeks in a small, rural indigenous community outside of the city Quetzaltenango. A conversation I had with one of the women in the village got stuck on my mind throughout the rest of my stay in Guatemala. We were talking about how the community was organized and she expressed a concern for how the organization had worsened the last years. After having gone through a tough process with a former *finca* owner, they had freed themselves and started their own community. This

unity and strength, which they once had, now seemed weaker:

> "We're not standing together, everybody's just doing their own thing in their own small groups, separately. We don't talk together like one community. We don't know what others are doing, where the money goes. Besides, many people are not honest. Like me, I am always honest. I prefer honesty. I often hear that people don't like that, that I am so straightforward and honest. But that's me. And I think people here could have been more honest. But it's not like that here." (from my field notes 09.05.10)

Whatever the reasons for her reflections, I find them especially intriguing because her community – together with the other small communities in the area – has not developed any community radio service. Apart from television and commercial radio, two religious radio stations are operating in the area. I believe this can show some of the great value and potential of a community radio service. First of all, the woman calls for more openness and transparency about what is going on in the different committees of their community, which the community radio stations I visited already to some extent are offering by providing a space for information and communication. She also reveals that internal division and conflicts are likely to exist in indigenous communities. Secondly, she seems to long for a more united community, so that they can work more together and strengthen one another.

Based on what I have learned and discussed here, I believe it is very clear that for indigenous groups who feel overlooked and who share distrust for the politics of their own state, one fundamental issue is the sense of belonging to a shared identity and community and to work for a common good. And with all this in mind, the community radio movement's slogan *"la radio comunitaria es mi voz, tu voz, nuestra voz"* (community radio is my voice, your voice, our voice) gets a new meaning, where collectivity precedes individualism. So far, this is what lays in the concept of *radios comunitarias* in Guatemala.

11.3 Closing remarks and suggestions for further research

There are several interesting issues that could have been examined in Guatemala's community radio field, which the scope of my study did not allow. First of all, I must have in mind the analytic complexity of my qualitative study. My findings are based on subjective interpretations. Different choices in my research design and decisions during my fieldwork could also have brought me to different findings, as I was only able to interview a very small percentage of Guatemalan community radio practitioners. A study of some of the other radio stations – especially when they have developed further – could offer a more thoroughly

perspective on the nature of community radio in Guatemala.

A comprehensive study of community members' reception and experience of the community radio in their own village would be strictly necessary in order to reveal more of the deliberative processes going on outside the radio station, as well as answering how and to what extent Guatemalan village people are utilizing the local media. A structured field observation at one specific radio station, or a content analysis of the radio programming, could also have showed more aspects of internal dynamics or forms of 'Maya community journalism'.

The role of religion in Maya communities, with both Catholic groups and the increasing Evangelist Protestant groupings is another diffuse and yet poorly explored part of alternative media practices. Some of my informants expressed an anxious and a bit hostile attitude towards the many religious radio stations, claiming that conservative Christian groups are critical to community radio because of the focus on Maya cultural values.

Another interesting development that is likely to prove great changes, also in the media landscape and communication forums, concerns the younger generation of Guatemalans. Nearly 40 percent of the population is under 15 years old (CIA Factbook 2010). Children of those who experienced the war are now growing up, with new skills and new knowledge of communications tools. How are they experiencing the local community radio station? Are they interested in traditional *marimba* music and stories from their past? Will they have different opinions concerning the purpose of Guatemalan community radio? Also, despite the general limited Internet access on a national level, the enormous increase in use of cell phones in Guatemala may open up for new forms of alternative or citizen journalism, a potential Kara Andrade (2010) utilized when creating the collaborative project *HablaGuate*. The project introduced a Website where Guatemalan citizens can post information directly with their cell phones, giving regular citizens a chance to connect their messages to the world, messages that Guatemalans may feel they cannot publish offline. In a corporate media landscape with little investigative journalism, such social media tools can open up new channels for online deliberation.

Epilogue: The future for community radio in Guatemala

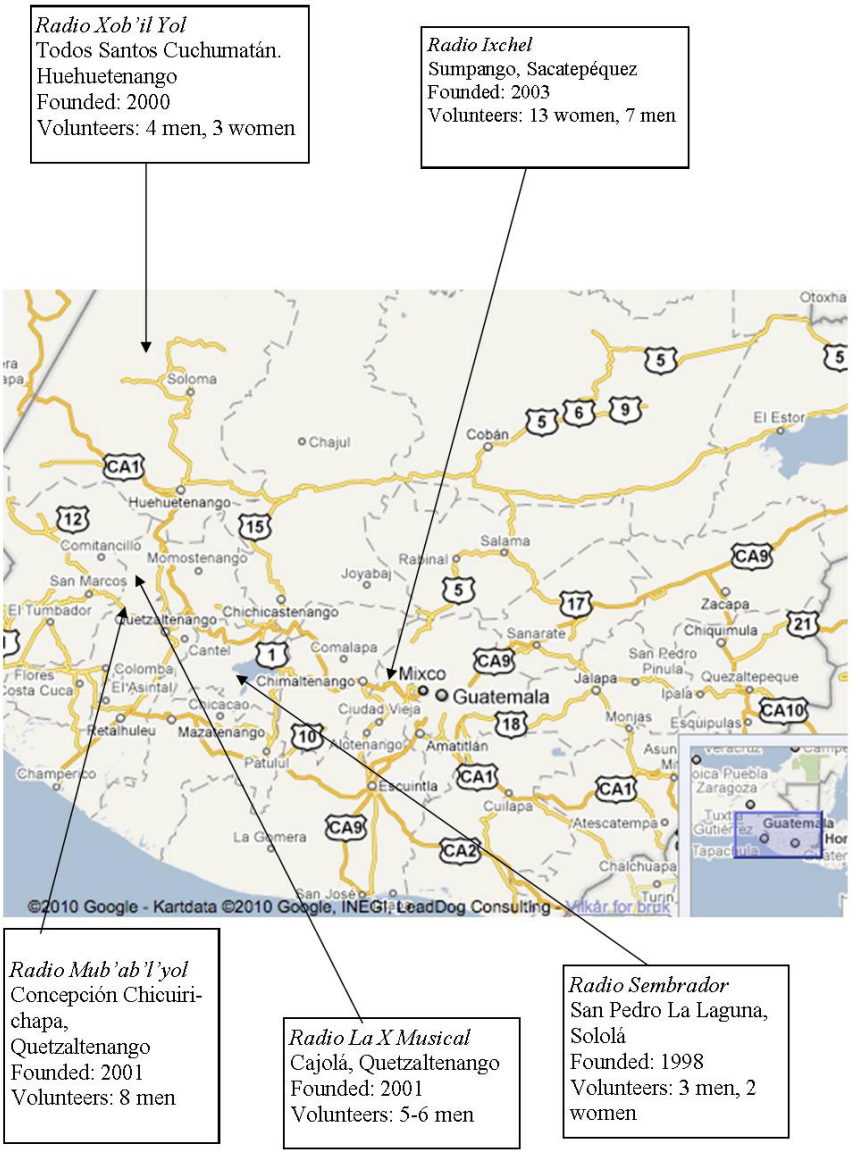
Finally, if the law proposal gets through, this can certainly change a lot of what I have found so far. When I write this, in December 2010, the progress is still uncertain, as the process in Congress has slowed down. The first half of 2011 is the movement's next hope. The

Guatemalan community radio movement has several hopes and goals for how to continue expanding the format when they finally become recognized as indigenous community radio in the media landscape. What will happen, then? Will the Guatemalan community radio practitioners be able to 'move out of the box' and develop their own independent forms of Maya community journalism and radio practice?

Scholars within the field of journalism and media studies are increasingly starting to question the dominant Western view of journalism. Studies show significant gaps between theory and practice (Wasserman & de Beer 2009, Curran & Park 2000). This gap has clearly surfaced during the development of my thesis, demonstrating the need to de-westernize our so-called normative principles and the Western individualism. Journalism operates differently from context to context and sometimes the ideal of objectivity must be left for the sake of community identification and the protection of cultures and peoples. Just as alternative media channels evolve as a result of dissatisfaction with mainstream media – in content, production processes, and formats – I believe we could have a lot to win by allowing the life-world of a Maya 'locutor' and a Maya community radio challenge not only our understanding of journalistic practice, but also our understanding of ourselves.

APPENDIX A

MAP OF COMMUNITY RADIO STATIONS



Note: The number of volunteers is only approximate, as some might be temporarily engaged or involved in certain processes.

APPENDIX B

Draft received by representatives in the community radio movement (my translation):

May 26 2010

BASIC REQUIREMENTS FOR A COMMUNITY RADIO

- Defined by representatives in the community radio movement.

1. Should be operated and managed by a legal board of appointed directors, and should operate independently.
2. Should be educative, cultural and informative, with debates and entertainment, defined in a programming schedule.
3. Should be registered and/or associated with a radio association that is part of the national council for community radios
4. Should operate with gender equality on both organizational and programmatic levels
5. Should have municipal coverage
6. Should have programming with Maya, Garífunas or Xinca, based on local conditions
7. Should have a defined mission and vision
8. The name of the radio stations should have cultural identity
9. The radio should not be sectarian or linked to a political party
10. Should promote national identity and regional values
11. Should manage resources for the development and strengthening of the radio station.

APPENDIX C

Qualitative interview guide, semi-structured (English translation)

General
- Name/age
- Radio
- Work period
- Function: Role, programming, hours per week, etc.

The work
- Why did you start in the radio?
- Could you tell more about your work, what kind of programming you do, etc.?
- How did you learn to manage a radio /radio program?
- Have you been to seminars and workshops – what did you learn here?
- What is you motive to work here?
- Have there been any difficulties with working here, or with the radio?
- You are a volunteer – how is it?

The content
- How do you decide the programming/content?
- This changes as well? How?
- How do you experience this process – who decides?
- What topics?
- Do you have news on the radio? Local, national, international.
- How do you find the news?
- Do you make interviews on the radio? How, with whom, etc.
- DO you make reportages in the community? How, why not, etc.

Community radio
- What is a community radio?
- What topics/themes should be important for a community radio?
- In your opinion, what are the strengths with radio … (name)?
- What are the challenges?
- Why do the village need this radio?
- Any difficulties with maintaining the goals of a *community radio?*

The community
- How does the radio interact with the community – communication with the people, who participates, etc.
- What is your general impression – what do people say about this radio?

Role/journalism
- What are you – the *locutores.* What title?
- What is journalism for you?
- Who are journalists, and how are they?
- The radio practitioners here in the radio – are you journalists? How or why not?

The situation for Guatemalan community radio

- How is it to work in a radio station that is not completely legal?
- What is most difficult with this?
- Why do you fight for the law?
- Why, do you think, haven't they implemented the law yet?
- How would the radio be like if the conditions were better?

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Informants

Locutores (LO):

LO1 – *Felix C. Hernandez*, Radio Mujb'ab'yol, Conepción. Guatemala, May 24, 2010 (49 min.).

LO2 – *Angelina Mendoza,* Radio Xob'il yol, Todos Santos Cuchumatán, Guatemala, June 1, 2010 (20 min.).

LO3 – *Nicolasa Ixchel Pablo Pablo*, Radio Xob'il yol , Todos Santos Cuchumatán, Guatemala, June 1, 2010 (30 min.).

LO4 – *Silverio Pérez Ramos,* Radio Xob'il yol, Todos Santos Cuchumatán, Guatemala, June 1, 2010 (24 min.).

LO5 – *Rosendo Pablo Ramirez,* Radio Xob'il yol, Todos Santos Cuchumatán, Guatemala, June 1, 2010 (58 min.).

LO6 – *Mario Huiniles,* Radio La X Musical, Cajola, Guatemala, June 4, 2010 (44 min.).

LO7 – *German S. Ahic,* Radio Sembrador, San Pedro La Laguna, Guatemala, June 8, 2010 (67 min).

LO8 – *Antonio Garcia Cortez,* Radio Sembrador, San Pedro La Laguna, Guatemala, June 8, 2010 (45 min.).

LO9 – *Brenda Garcia Peneleu,* Radio Sembrador, San Pedro La Laguna, Guatemala, June 8, 2010 (54 min.).

LO10 – *Vicky Rosmery Garcia Peneleu*, Radio Sembrador, San Pedro la Laguna, Guatemala, June 12, 2010 (37 min.).

LO11 – *Angelica Cubur Sul*, Radio Ixchel, Sumpango, Gua6temala, June 14, 2010 (27 min.).

LO12 – *Ancelmo Xunic,* Radio Ixchel, Sumpango, Guatemala, June 14, 2010 (31 min.).

Other informants (IN):

IN1 – Mendoza, Fortunato Pablo. Todos Santos Cuchumatán, June 2, 2010.

IN2 – Andrade, Kara. Telephone interview from Sololá to Antigua, June 6, 2010 (31 min.).

IN3 – Saenz, Edgar René. Sololá, June 9, 2010 (46 min.).

IN4 – Camp, Mark. Antigua, June 15, 2010 + April 27, 28, 2010 (68 min.).

IN5 – Recinos, Alberto «Tino». Quetzaltenango, April 30, May 8, May 28, 2010.

IN6 – Gomez Cecar. Antigua, April 28. 2010.

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